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TESIS DOCTORAL

Haciendo historia: autopercepciones y visión del pasado de la *inteligencia* polaca en la oposición (1976-1991)

History in the making. Opposition *inteligencia* in Poland (1976-1991): self-perceptions and discourses on the past

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

María Cristina Álvarez González

Directores

Elena Hernández Sandoica
José M. Faraldo Jarillo

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inteligencia polaca en la oposición (1976-1991)*

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MARÍA CRISTINA ÁLVAREZ GONZÁLEZ

FACULTAD DE GEOGRAFÍA E HISTORIA

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Esta tesis está dedicada a mi madre.

Korzystam z najstarszego prawa wyobraźni
i po raz pierwszy w życiu przywołuję zmarłych,
wypatruję ich twarze, nasłuchuję kroków,
choć wiem, że kto umarł, ten umarł dokładnie.

Czas własną głowę w ręce brać
mówiąc jej: Biedny Jorik, gdzież twoja niewiedza,
gdzież twoja ślepa ufność, gdzież twoja
niewinność,
twoje jakościobędzie, równowaga ducha
pomiędzy nie sprawdzoną a sprawdzoną prawdą?

Wierzyłam, że zdradzili, że niewarci imion,
skoro chwast się natrzęsa z ich nieznanych mogił
i kruki przedrzeźniają, i śnieżycę szydzą
— a to byli, Joriku, fałszywi świadkowie.

Umarłych wieczność dotąd trwa,
dokąd pamięcią się im płaci.
Chwiejna waluta. Nie ma dnia,
by ktoś wieczności swej nie tracił.

Dziś o wieczności więcej wiem:
można ją dawać i odbierać.
Kogo zwano zdrajcą — ten
razem z imieniem ma umierać.

Ta nasza nad zmarłymi moc
wymaga nierozchwianej wagi
i żeby sąd nie sądził w noc,
i żeby sędzia nie był nagi.

Ziemia wre — a to oni, którzy są już ziemią,
wstają grudka po grudce, garstka obok garstki,
wychodzą z przemilczenia, wracają do imion,
do pamięci narodu, do wieńców i braw.

Gdzież moja władza nad słowami?
Słowa opadły na dno łązy,
słowa słowa niezdadne do wskrzeszania ludzi,
opis martwy jak zdjęcie przy błysku magnezyj.
Nawet na półoddechu nie umiem ich zbudzić
ja, Syzyf przypisany do piekła poezji.

Idą do nas. I ostrzy jak diament
— po witrynach wylśnionych od frontu,
po okienkach przytulnych mieszkańek,
po różowych okularach, po szklanych
mózgach, sercach, cichutko tną.

Wisława Szymborska: *Rehabilitacja*

Constructed memories are continuously subject to critical scrutiny and revision in the framework of a history that is constantly written and rewritten from an ever-changing present. History is in flux; it is, like the present, in a permanent state of transformation. History does not exist 'out there', waiting to be discovered, but is permanently invented in order to give meaning to the present -and to the future- through the past.

Bo Stráth: "Introduction. Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community"

P.P. - En realidad, doctor, tanto el Bisa, como el Abue y el Padre lo que querían es que yo fuese un buen soldado así que llegara mi guerra.

Dr. - Pero ¿es que a la fuerza tenías tú que hacer otra guerra?

P.P. - Por lo visto, sí señor, eso decían, que yo me recuerdo al Abue: todos tenemos una guerra como todos tenemos una mujer, ¿se da cuenta? O sea, para que usted se entere, cada vez que pasábamos por Telégrafos, donde el Isauro, el Bisa la misma copla: ¡Qué, Isauro! ¿No llegó la guerra de éste? Que el Isauro, a ver, aún no hay noticias, señor Vendiano; ya le avisaré.

Dr. - ¡Qué cosas!

Miguel Delibes: *Las guerras de nuestros antepasados*

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AK	Armia Krajowa Ejército Nacional Home Army
IPN	Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Instituto de Memoria Nacional Institute of National Remembrance
KIK	Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej Club de la <i>Inteligencia</i> Católica Club of Catholic Intellectuals
KOR	Komitet Obrony Robotników Comité de Defensa Obrera Workers' Defense Committee
KOS	Komitet Oporu Społecznego Comité de Resistencia Social Committee of Social Resistance
KPN	Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej Confederación por una Polonia Independiente Confederation of Independent Poland
ND	Narodowa Demokracja Demócratas Nacionales National Democracy
NOWa	Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza Oficina Editorial Independiente Independent Publishing House
NSZZ "S"	Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność" Sindicato Autónomo Independiente "Solidaridad" Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity"
PAN	Polska Akademia Nauk Academia Polaca de Ciencias Polish Academy of Sciences
PKWN	Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego Comité Polaco de Liberación Nacional Polish Committee of National Liberation
PPN	Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe Entendimiento Polaco por la Independencia Polish Understanding for Independence
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza Partido Polaco de los Trabajadores Polish Workers' Party

PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Partido Socialista Polaco Polish Socialist Party
PRL	Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa República Popular de Polonia Polish People's Republic
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe Partido Campesino Polaco Polish People's Party
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Partido Obrero Unificado Polaco Polish United Workers' Party
ROPCiO	Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela Movimiento de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos y Ciudadanos Movement for Defense of Human and Civic Rights
TKN	Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych Sociedad de Cursos Científicos Society of Scientific Courses
UW	Uniwersytet Warszawski Universidad de Varsovia Warsaw University
ZEN	Zeszyty Edukacji Narodowej Cuadernos de Educación Nacional Booklets for National Education

Resumen

Haciendo historia: autopercepciones y visión del pasado de la inteligencia polaca en la oposición (1976-1991)

En la presente investigación doctoral proponemos estudiar la relación entre intelectualidad, oposición política al comunismo y pensamiento histórico a través del caso de la República Popular de Polonia entre los años 1976 y 1991. En concreto, analizamos cómo los opositores intelectuales polacos interpretaron el pasado de su país en sus publicaciones y la forma en que su visión de la historia y de sí mismos como *inteligencia* influyeron, a su vez, en su percepción del presente y del futuro.

Desde las coordenadas marcadas por la historia intelectual, hemos tomado en consideración aspectos teóricos relacionados con los conceptos de mito, *inteligencia* y oposición. Además, planteamos una interpretación de los trabajos históricos de los intelectuales polacos a la luz de las tesis de Walter Benjamin *Sobre el concepto de historia* y sugerimos que, en ocasiones, se produce un fenómeno que hemos denominado *historización del tiempo presente*. Por último, definimos el tipo de fuentes escritas y gráficas utilizadas en la investigación y precisamos algunos términos básicos vinculados con las publicaciones opositoras de los años setenta y ochenta en Polonia.

En su empeño por saber cómo enfrentarse a un poder represivo e ilegítimo, los intelectuales opositores volvieron su mirada hacia la historia en busca de inspiración y consejo, además de para justificar sus puntos de vista. Intentando estar a la altura de la misión mítica de la *inteligencia*, basada en el compromiso social y el liderazgo moral y político, recuperaron y reconsideraron ideales, valores transhistóricos o métodos, toda vez que advirtieron en contra de la recreación de ideologías políticas pretéritas en la actualidad. Consideraban que lo que unía a los polacos como nación era una tradición de comportamientos éticos procedentes de diversas fuentes, apostaban por distinguir entre patriotismo y nacionalismo y recurrían al antagonismo maniqueo tanto entre la nación y el aparato del Estado, como entre aquella y la ideología comunista soviética. Por otra parte, percibían a la sociedad polaca a lo largo del tiempo en términos de adquisición, pérdida y recuperación de su condición de sujeto histórico-político (*podmiotowość*). También reflexionaron sobre las complejas relaciones de sus compatriotas con Rusia-la URSS y Occidente, entendidas como la visión del *otro* y una búsqueda de responsabilidades morales y, por tanto, como una parte más de su propia identidad colectiva. Todo ello propició una percepción del paso del tiempo basada en la fusión de imágenes cíclicas y lineales, así como un gran interés por los elementos pioneros de las protestas y los movimientos de oposición al comunismo. Esto, a su vez, estimuló la conciencia histórica y la historización del tiempo presente, que se aprecian en los discursos sobre la (in)capacidad de cambiar el curso de los acontecimientos, el dilema entre poder y responsabilidad en la toma de decisiones y el tema de la posteridad, así como en la recolección, escritura y publicación masiva de documentos relacionados con actividades opositoras, última cuestión que estudiamos en nuestro trabajo.

En conclusión, los discursos sobre el pasado permitieron a los intelectuales polacos críticos definirse a sí mismos y a la nación en oposición al régimen comunista, influyeron en la percepción del presente y del futuro de los opositores hasta el punto de engendrar formas de razonamiento y acción específicas, y tenían la intención de unir, *liberar* e infundir valor a la sociedad polaca a fin de alcanzar la libertad, la independencia y la democracia.

En definitiva, con sus reflexiones sobre la historia y el tiempo, los intelectuales de la oposición polaca que hemos estudiado en este trabajo ofrecieron en 1976-1991 una relectura crítica sobre cómo habían sido, eran y podían llegar a ser los polacos como nación, y retomaron la misión mítica y prometeica de la *inteligencja* de guiar a su país en tiempos difíciles, conduciéndolo hacia días mejores.

Abstract

History in the Making. Opposition Inteligencja in Poland (1976-1991): Self-Perceptions and Discourses on the Past

The present Ph.D. dissertation aims to study the relation between intelligentsia, political opposition to Communism and historical thought in People's Republic of Poland between 1976 and 1991. We specifically try to answer the following questions: firstly, how did Polish opposition intellectuals approach their country's past in their writings? And, secondly, how did their perception of history plus their self-perception as *inteligencja* influence, in turn, their view of the present and the future?

Taking intellectual history as the starting point, we consider theoretical aspects related to the concepts of myth, *inteligencja* and opposition, suggest an interpretation of Polish intellectuals' historical reflections and works in the light of Walter Benjamin's theses *On the Concept of History* and, in addition, propose that a phenomenon we have christened as *historicization of present time* sometimes took place within them. Lastly, we define the genre and thematic criteria used to select our written and graphic sources and pin down the different terms one should be familiar with when approaching Polish opposition publications in the 1970s and 1980s, like *publicystyka*, *drugi obieg* (that is, underground publishing), *samizdat* and *tamizdat*.

In their determination to know how they should confront a repressive and illegitimate power, intellectual oppositionists turned to history for inspiration and guidance, as well as to justify their views. Trying to keep up with *inteligencja*'s mythical mission of social commitment plus moral and political leadership, they recovered and revised ideals, transhistorical values or methods, while advising against the recreation of past political ideologies in the present. They believed that what drew Poles together as a nation was a tradition of ethical behaviors coming from different sources (Western-European values, Catholicism and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), wanted to distinguish nationalism (destructive) from patriotism (constructive) and resorted to a Manichaeian antagonism both between the nation and the State apparatus and between the former and Soviet Communist ideology. On the other hand, they regarded Polish society throughout time in terms of its acquisition, loss and retrieval of historical and political agency (*podmiotowość*). Similarly, they pondered as well on the complex relationships of their fellow countrymen with Russia/the USSR and the West, understood as a question of "otherness" plus a search for moral accountability and, hence, as another indispensable part of their own collective identity. All this fostered a perception of time based on the blend of cyclic and lineal images of the past and on a keen interest in the pioneering aspects of Polish protests and opposition movements. In turn, this stimulated historical awareness and historicization of present time, which can be appreciated in *inteligencja*'s discourses about the (in)capability to change the course of events, the dilemma between power and responsibility in decision-making and the question of posterity, as well as in the massive gathering, writing and publication of documents related to opposition activities, to which we devote the last part of our work.

To sum up, discourses on the past enabled Polish critical intellectuals to define themselves and their nation in opposition to the communist regime, influenced oppositionists' perception of the present and the future to the point of engendering specific forms of reasoning and action and had the purpose of uniting, "liberating" and emboldening Polish society in order to achieve freedom, independence and democracy.

In conclusion, with their reflections on history and time, the Polish opposition intellectuals we have approached in this dissertation offered back in 1976-1991 a personal and critical approach as to who Poles had been, were and could become as a nation, and resumed *inteligencja*'s mythical, Promethean mission of guiding their country towards better days in moments of hardship.

Haciendo historia: autopercepciones y visión del pasado de la *inteligencia* polaca en la oposición (1976-1991)

Introducción

La idea que no trata de convertirse en palabras es una mala idea; la palabra que no trata de convertirse en acción es, a su vez, una mala palabra.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton

No son las locomotoras, sino las ideas, las que llevan y arrastran al mundo.

Victor Hugo

Las ideas son los mimbres sobre los que se ha tejido y se teje, para bien o para mal, la historia de los seres humanos¹. Detrás de muchas de ellas se encuentra la figura del intelectual; éste, contemplándose a sí mismo en ocasiones como un representante y guía de la nación o de amplios colectivos de la sociedad, decide actuar bien como impulsor del cambio o de la reforma, bien como cabecilla de los inconformistas, los renegados y los objetores, cuando no ambas cosas al mismo tiempo. La proliferación de estudios sobre intelectuales críticos, abiertamente enfrentados con las viejas autoridades, o que ponen en cuestión las nuevas, no debe extrañarnos si consideramos, como François Dosse, que “la entrada del intelectual en la política [fue] originalmente un acto de protesta”. Son de obligada mención a este respecto, qué duda cabe, la Ilustración y la Revolución francesas, además del *affaire* Dreyfus a finales del siglo XIX, pero también la España de los Austrias según los ensayos de José Antonio Maravall, las Generaciones del 98 y del 14 sobre las que se detienen, entre otros, Marichal y Varela, la Segunda República y el exilio intelectual tras la Guerra Civil española, las revoluciones latinoamericanas, la disidencia y el exilio cubanos que retrata Rafael Rojas, o la “Resistencia” al fascismo y al nazismo de pensadores franceses, italianos y alemanes recogida por James D. Wilkinson².

Al tándem formado por *intelectualidad* y *oposición* cabe añadirsele un tercer elemento, el *pensamiento histórico*, cuya importancia no ha dejado de aumentar dentro

¹ Esta investigación doctoral ha sido posible gracias a la concesión y disfrute de una beca del Programa de Formación del Profesorado Universitario (FPU) del Ministerio de Educación español (2009-2013).

² DOSSE, François: *La marcha de las ideas. Historia de los intelectuales, historia intelectual*, Valencia, Universitat de València, 2006 (2003), 24 para la cita textual; MORNET, Daniel: *El pensamiento francés en el siglo XVIII. El trasfondo intelectual de la Revolución francesa*, Madrid, Ediciones Encuentro, 1988; MARAVALL, José Antonio: *La oposición política bajo los Austrias*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1974; MARICHAL, Juan: *El intelectual y la política en España (1898-1936). Cuatro conferencias*, Madrid, Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes/ Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1990; VARELA, Javier: *La novela de España. Los intelectuales y el problema español*, Madrid, Taurus, 1999; NICOLÁS MARÍN, Encarna y ALTED VIGIL, Alicia: *Disidencias en el franquismo (1939-1975)*, Murcia, DM, 1999; ABELLÁN, José Luis (dir.): *El exilio español de 1939*, Madrid, Taurus, 1976-1978, 6 vols.; MARSAL, Juan Francisco: *Pensar bajo el franquismo. Intelectuales y política en la generación de los años cincuenta*, Barcelona, Península, 1979; GILMAN, Claudia: *Entre la pluma y el fusil. Debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2003; ROJAS, Rafael: *Tumbas sin sosiego. Revolución, disidencia y exilio del intelectual cubano*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2006; WILKINSON, James D.: *La resistencia intelectual en Europa*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989.

del ámbito de las humanidades y las ciencias sociales. Los discursos históricos, presentes en mayor o menor medida en algunos de los ejemplos anteriores, trascienden el marco estrictamente académico con más frecuencia de lo que habitualmente se cree, generando debates y controversias de gran calado al interactuar con audiencias amplias y, en consecuencia, con diversas memorias colectivas³. Mi investigación doctoral se enmarca precisamente dentro de las coordenadas que definen estos tres elementos.

A lo largo de estas páginas, me propongo estudiar la relación entre intelectualidad, oposición política y escritura histórica basándome en el caso de la República Popular de Polonia⁴ desde mediados de los años 70 hasta 1989/1991. Un caso que consideramos de especial relevancia, en primer lugar, debido a la centralidad y al carácter de mito que adquirió la figura del intelectual en el imaginario nacional polaco durante los últimos siglos; en segundo lugar, por el peso que tuvieron los movimientos de oposición al comunismo en el seno de la sociedad polaca y más allá de sus fronteras; y, por último, debido a la popularidad sin precedentes que alcanzaron las reflexiones históricas durante esas dos décadas en un país donde el interés público por la historia ya era (y es) de por sí muy alto. En este trabajo, analizaremos concretamente cómo se aproximaron los opositores intelectuales polacos, a través de sus propias publicaciones, al pasado de su país, y la forma en que su visión de la historia influyó sobre su percepción del presente y del futuro.

Marco cronológico y ámbito de la investigación

Hemos tomado los años 1976 y 1989/1991 como límites de la investigación debido a los cambios cuantitativos y cualitativos que se produjeron entonces en la trayectoria de los movimientos polacos críticos con el sistema comunista. A raíz de la represión gubernamental de las protestas obreras por el alza de precios en junio de 1976, un pequeño grupo de intelectuales fundó en septiembre de ese mismo año el Comité de Defensa Obrera (Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR) y, pese a su reducido tamaño, pronto se convirtió en uno de los primeros movimientos abiertamente opositores dentro del país, marcando un antes y un después en la forma de protestar y de oponerse al gobierno comunista⁵. Además, dentro del ámbito editorial polaco independiente (y, por tanto, no sujeto a la censura)⁶ comenzaron a usarse nuevos sistemas mecánicos de

³ PASAMAR, Gonzalo: *Apologia and Criticism. Historians and the history of Spain, 1500-2000*, Oxford, Bern..., Peter Lang, 2010; ARÓSTEGUI, Julio (ed.): *España en la memoria de tres generaciones. De la esperanza a la reparación*, Madrid, Editorial Complutense y Fundación Largo Caballero, 2007; TYRRELL, Ian: *Historians in Public. The Practice of American History, 1890-1970*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 2005; TRAVERSO, Enzo: *El pasado, instrucciones de uso. Historia, memoria, política*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2007; CARRERAS ARES, Juan José, FORCADELL ÁLVAREZ, Carlos et al.: *Usos públicos de la historia*, Madrid/ Zaragoza, Marcial Pons Historia/ Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2003; FORCADELL, Carlos, PASAMAR, Gonzalo et al.: *Usos de la historia y políticas de la memoria*, Zaragoza, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004.

⁴ En polaco Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL.

⁵ ZUZOWSKI, Robert: *Political Dissent and Opposition in Poland. The Workers' Defense Committee "KOR"*, London/ Westport (Connecticut), Praeger, 1992; FRISZKE, Andrzej: *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945-1980*, London, Aneks, 1994, 338-406, 588-589; BERNHARD, Michael H.: *The Origins of Democratization in Poland. Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, 76-130.

⁶ En el contexto polaco de 1976-1989, las publicaciones no sujetas a la censura eran descritas preferentemente como "independientes" (*niezależne*) o, un poco más adelante, como *drugi obieg* ("segundo campo"); la palabra "clandestina" (*zakonspirowana, tajna*) se utilizaba con menos frecuencia porque se asociaba más a publicaciones de épocas pasadas, igual que el término *bibuła* (siglo XIX, período de entreguerras, años 40-50). Véase el sub-apartado dedicado a las fuentes para más detalles.

imprensa que, aplicados primeramente a publicaciones periódicas con vocación informativa y después a la *publicystyka* en general, facilitaron la copia masiva de los textos, permitiendo una difusión muy superior a la conseguida hasta ese momento⁷.

Este hecho, junto con el inicio de las actividades del KOR, se convierte en la frontera que divide una etapa de propuestas editoriales independientes esporádicas, fuertemente clandestinas y técnicamente sencillas, de otra etapa en la que debutaron muchas revistas que serían importantes a lo largo de los años siguientes, tanto porque lograron ser más duraderas en el tiempo, como porque en sus páginas se fueron fraguando los programas y los puntos de vista de los círculos opositores del país (como *Głos*, *Krytyka*, *Zapis*, *Puls*, *Robotnik*, *Bratniak*...). Gracias tanto a las publicaciones periódicas como a los libros, el movimiento editorial independiente no tardó en consolidarse e institucionalizar su actividad. La primera casa editorial de estas características, Nieocenzurowana Oficyna Wydawnicza, rebautizada más adelante como Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, operaba ya entre finales de 1976 y principios de 1977 en Lublin, para después trasladarse a Varsovia⁸.

Por otro lado, con las primeras elecciones semi-libres celebradas en la República Popular de Polonia en junio de 1989, la antigua oposición cambió de “estatus” y pasó a formar parte de las instituciones oficiales de poder, promoviendo nuevas normas y leyes que garantizaban la libertad política y de expresión, con lo que dio comienzo la etapa de transición a la democracia (*transformacja*) mientras, a nivel internacional, el bloque comunista quedaba desmantelado⁹.

En alguna ocasión, nuestro límite cronológico se amplía hasta un par de años más tarde, pues es entonces cuando algunos intelectuales publicaron reflexiones acerca de lo que supuso para ellos pasar de ser una “oposición moral” a líderes políticos activos o, sencillamente, autores no perseguidos. Su participación en la vida pública se prolongó, pero también cambió en muchos aspectos, y es sólo un tiempo después cuando expresaron su asombro, algunos de sus dilemas y dudas sobre la nueva situación general y la suya propia.

Interés del objeto de estudio

Hay al menos cuatro razones que hacen que me interese por las construcciones del pasado de los intelectuales polacos en la oposición.

Primero, por la relevancia y originalidad políticas de sus ideas y actuación. El pensamiento de los activistas y estrategias opositores de la *inteligencja* polaca ha sido muy importante en dos sentidos: en primer lugar, porque los movimientos sociales de base autóctonos que crearon o apoyaron contribuyeron de manera notable a la caída del sistema comunista; y en segundo lugar porque, junto con autoridades en la materia,

⁷ MIKOŁAJCZYK, Magdalena: *Jak się pisało o historii...: problemy polityczne powojennej Polski w publikacjach drugiego obiegu lat siedemdziesiątych i osiemdziesiątych*, Kraków, Księgarnia Akademicka, 1998, 17-18; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 104.

⁸ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 17-18; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 105, 107.

⁹ CASTLE, Marjorie: *Triggering Communism's Collapse. Perceptions and Power in Poland's Transition*, Lanham y otras, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003; DOBEK-OSTROWSKA, Bogusława: “El proceso de Transición en Polonia”, en MARTÍN DE LA GUARDIA, Ricardo M. y PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, Guillermo A. (eds.): *Los países de la antigua Europa del Este y España ante la ampliación de la Unión Europea. Jornadas de Estudio y Análisis celebradas en Valladolid del 18 al 22 de Septiembre de 2000*, Valladolid, Instituto de Estudios Europeos/ Universidad de Valladolid, 2001, 53-69; EKIERT, Grzegorz y KUBIK, Jan: *Rebellious Civil Society. Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2002 (1999); SWAIN, Geoffrey y SWAIN, Nigel: *Eastern Europe since 1945*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 (1993), 201 y ss.

consideramos que la obra intelectual que generaron individual y colectivamente ha supuesto una de las aportaciones a la teoría política actual más originales, penetrantes y útiles¹⁰.

Segundo, por la prolongación de su faceta pública, pasando de la oposición durante la dictadura a la oficialidad y la responsabilidad cívica en democracia. Muchos opositores polacos de los años 70 y 80 ocuparon puestos políticos y/o desempeñaron funciones públicas muy destacadas durante la transición (*transformacja*) y en el período democrático. Por ejemplo, Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927-2013) fue el primer primer ministro no comunista de Polonia después de casi medio siglo, y Marcin Król (n. 1944), historiador y destacado *publicysta*, fue miembro de su equipo electoral en 1990, además de redactor principal de la revista *Res Publica* (luego *Res Publica Nowa*, 1979-1981 y 1987-1992) y decano de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Aplicadas de la Universidad de Varsovia (1996-2002). Jacek Kuroń (1934-2004) fue Ministro de Trabajo y de Política Social en 1989-1990 y 1992-1993 y, pese a su derrota en las elecciones presidenciales de 1995, fue diputado entre 1989 y 2001, además de líder del partido Unia Wolności, y después fundó junto con su esposa la Uniwersytet Powszechny im. Jan Józef Lipski en Teremiski, una institución socio-cultural informal que continúa en activo y de la que fue primer rector¹¹. Władysław Bartoszewski (1922-2015) presidió desde 1990 el Consejo Internacional del Museo Estatal de Auschwitz-Birkenau, fue embajador de Polonia en Austria durante cinco años, senador entre 1997 y 2001 y ministro de Asuntos Exteriores en 1995 y 2000-2001. Por otro lado, después de desempeñar distintas responsabilidades políticas, el historiador Bronisław Geremek (1932-2008)¹² también fue Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores entre 1997 y 2000, y Anna Radziwiłł ocupó varios puestos directivos en el Ministerio de Educación desde los años 90 hasta su muerte en 2009. Wojciech Roszkowski (n. 1947) ocupó hasta hace pocos años un escaño como eurodiputado, y su obra sobre la Polonia contemporánea, publicada clandestinamente en los años 80, pasó a ser (previa revisión) la base del manual de historia que preparó junto a Anna Radziwiłł (1939-2009) para enseñanza secundaria¹³. Zbigniew Bujak (n. 1954) también fue diputado, y Adam Michnik (n. 1946), después de abandonar la política de primera línea, fue durante muchos años redactor-jefe del diario *Gazeta Wyborcza*, el periódico por excelencia de la *transformacja*. Además, la mayoría del personal universitario en los departamentos de historia (a excepción de aquellos más estrechamente ligados al Partido Comunista Polaco) conservó sus puestos después del fin de la dictadura y continuó progresando en su profesión. Entre 1989 y 1990, por ejemplo, Krystyna Kersten (1931-2008), Jerzy Jedlicki (n. 1930) y Jerzy Holzer (1930-2015) fueron nombrados profesores del Instituto de Historia de la Academia Polaca de Ciencias (IH PAN) o del de la Universidad de

¹⁰ FALK, Barbara: *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, Budapest/ New York, Central European University Press, 2003, 2-3; BRIER, Robert: "Broadening the Cultural History of the Cold War. The Emergence of the Polish Workers' Defense Committee and the Rise of Human Rights", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 15 (4), Fall 2013, 104-127.

¹¹ Para conocer su trayectoria y proyectos más a fondo: <http://www.teremiski.edu.pl/>. Por el momento, la web sólo está disponible en polaco.

¹² Entre las obras de Bronisław Geremek traducidas al castellano se cuentan: *La piedad y la horca: historia de la miseria y de la caridad en Europa*, Madrid, Alianza, 1989; *Marc Bloch, historiador y resistente*, Buenos Aires, Biblos, 1990 (1986); *La estirpe de Caín: la imagen de los vagabundos y de los pobres en las literaturas de los siglos XV al XVII*, Madrid, Mondadori, 1991. También *Bronisław Geremek en diálogo con Juan Carlos Vidal*, Madrid, A. & M. Muchnik, 1997.

¹³ RADZIWIŁŁ, Anna y ROSZKOWSKI, Wojciech: *Historia 1871-1945: podręcznik dla szkół średnich y Historia 1945-1990: podręcznik dla szkół średnich*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, 1994. También ROSZKOWSKI, Wojciech: *Historia Polski, 1914-1993*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, 1994. Todos cuentan con sucesivas reediciones o ampliaciones.

Varsovia (IH UW); Holzer fue también director del Centro de Estudios Alemanes (Zakład Studiów nad Niemcami, 1990-2005) y del Instituto de Estudios Políticos de la Academia (ISP PAN) entre 2000 y 2004, mientras que Jedlicki dirige desde 1991 el Gabinete de Historia de la *Inteligencja* del IH PAN¹⁴.

Debido a esta combinación de cambios y permanencias, buena parte de los discursos históricos alternativos y de la visión del mundo de la antigua oposición al comunismo pasaron a ser durante los años 90 los discursos hegemónicos u oficiales¹⁵, de ahí que sea interesante rastrear y conocer sus orígenes en tiempos de la República Popular de Polonia.

Tercero, porque contribuyeron a la profundización y divulgación del conocimiento histórico. Gracias a sus obras y a la curiosidad que mostraron por cuestiones históricas, los *inteligenci* críticos con el gobierno comunista ayudaron a difundir aspectos sobre el pasado polaco poco o nada conocidos bajo este régimen, o bien ratificaron, gracias a su autoridad moral y académica, la información sobre este pasado que ya circulaba extraoficialmente. Revalorizaron, además, algunos temas tradicionales que habían sido evitados o excluidos de la cultura comunista oficial, y promovieron debates acerca de cuestiones olvidadas o controvertidas, principalmente sobre historia reciente, que siguieron creando tendencia después de 1989: la guerra polaco-bolchevique (1920), la política de la URSS hacia Polonia en la Segunda Guerra Mundial y la masacre de Katyń (abril-mayo 1940)¹⁶, las deportaciones de polacos a Siberia, las relaciones entre judíos polacos y polacos no-judíos en la Segunda República y durante la Guerra, la reafirmación o puesta en duda de la imagen de Polonia como “víctima” y, sobre todo, la naturaleza del régimen de la PRL y la valoración de su legado (cuestiones de historia política, características del aparato estatal y de la oposición, el sistema represivo, las crisis del sistema y la campaña anti-semita de 1968, las relaciones de la Iglesia con el Estado comunista, etc.)¹⁷.

¹⁴ Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 356-357; BARLIŃSKA, Izabela: *La sociedad civil en Polonia* y Solidaridad, Madrid, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas/ Siglo XXI, 2006, 364-370; CHRISTIAN, Michel y DROIT, Emmanuel: “Écrire l’histoire du communisme: l’histoire sociale de la RDA et de la Pologne communiste en Allemagne, en Pologne et en France”, *Genèses*, 61, 2005, 120; *Opozycja w PRL. Słownik biograficzny, 1956-1989* (editor en jefe: Jan Skórzyński), 3 vols., Warszawa, Ośrodek KARTA, 2000, 2002 and 2006, respectivamente.

¹⁵ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 232; DOMAŃSKI, Henryk: “Wstęp”, en DOMAŃSKI, Henryk (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce. Specjaliści, twórcy, klerkowie, klasa średnia?*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2008, 11; MIKUŁOWSKI POMORSKI, Jerzy: “Wprowadzenie: Inteligencja wobec nowych czasów”, en MIKUŁOWSKI POMORSKI, Jerzy (pod red.): *Inteligencja. Między tradycją a wyzwaniem współczesności*, Kraków, Akademia Ekonomiczna w Krakowie, 2005, 6; RUDNICKI, Zbigniew: “O inteligencji w dobie przemian”, en Mikułowski Pomorski (pod red.): *Inteligencja...*, 89; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 194-195; KOPEČEK, Michal: “Human Rights Facing a National Past. Dissident ‘Civic Patriotism’ and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968-1989”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 38, 2012, 601; WAWRZYNIAK, Joanna: “History and Memory: The Social Frames of Contemporary Polish Historiography”, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 103, 2011, 134.

¹⁶ Ejecuciones en masa de más de 21.000 oficiales del ejército, policías, intelectuales y otros civiles polacos llevadas a cabo por la policía secreta de la Unión Soviética (Comisariado del Pueblo para Asuntos Internos, NKVD) en el bosque de Katyń, cerca de la ciudad de Smolensk (actualmente territorio ruso).

¹⁷ GÓRNY, Maciej: “From the Splendid Past into the Unknown Future: Historical Studies in Poland after 1989”, in ANTOHI, Sorin, TRENCSENYI, Balázs and APOR, Péter, (eds.): *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, Budapest/ New York, Central European University Press, 2007, 106, 112-133; Christian y Droit: “Écrire l’histoire...”, 120-122, 126-127; PERSAK, Krzysztof: “Otwarcie archiwów i przełom w polskiej historiografii dziejów najnowszych”, en *Sprawiedliwość okresu transformacji- przekazywanie doświadczeń Polski dla Tunezji. Modele rozliczeń z przeszłością. Tunis, 5 grudnia 2012 r. Zbiór materiałów konferencyjnych*, Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka/ CTJT/ Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa/ Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Tunisie, 2013, 37-46, en http://www.hfhr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/tunezja_pl.pdf; BAK, Grzegorz: “La

Y, en cuarto y último lugar, porque reevaluaban para avanzar. Gracias nuevamente a sus reflexiones históricas, los *inteligenci* opositores contribuyeron a reconsiderar el pasado polaco en la esfera pública con el fin de que el país tuviera mayores probabilidades de éxito como nación y como Estado en el futuro.

Las cuestiones sobre las que trabajamos aún son, además, poco conocidas en el contexto historiográfico español, y se diferencian bastante de la propia experiencia española durante la dictadura franquista y de las formas de lucha y protesta que desarrolló aquí la oposición política. Con lo cual mi aportación puede servir, en cierto modo, para aproximarnos a otras realidades y conocer mejor tanto aquello que podemos tener en común como sus, o nuestras, especificidades.

Por otro lado, esta investigación también puede verse como un estudio de caso acerca de cuestiones e inquietudes frecuentemente compartidas, tales como nuestra forma de percibir el paso del tiempo, de reflexionar sobre lo acontecido, de sentirnos dueños o esclavos de nuestro pasado, de preguntarnos hasta qué punto podemos influir o cambiar aquello y a aquellos que nos rodean (es decir, el impacto social que tienen nuestras acciones), cómo nos puede impulsar o lastrar el afán de pasar a la posteridad, o el afán por preservar y dar testimonio, etcétera.

Hipótesis

Al profundizar, desde las coordenadas marcadas por la historia intelectual¹⁸, en la percepción del paso del tiempo de los círculos opositores polacos, nos hemos planteado las siguientes preguntas, a las que trataremos de dar respuesta en esta tesis: ¿Cómo creían los *inteligenci* de entonces que fueron, eran y podían llegar a ser los polacos como nación? Y ¿cómo se autopercebían como grupo social que cree que puede cambiar la situación actual de un país?

A la hora de definir la nación polaca y a sí mismos, muchos intelectuales compaginaron en sus obras la lógica racional con el recurso a diversos mitos nacionales. Esto desencadenó un proceso, propio del pensamiento mítico, de búsqueda de referentes en el pasado a fin de poder actuar en el presente y llegar al futuro que, desde ese mismo presente, ya estaban proyectando. A lo largo de esta tesis, sostenemos que este interés por el pasado y su visión de la historia de Polonia influyó en su percepción del presente y les hizo adquirir (tal vez recuperar) e insuflar una conciencia histórica que, entre otras consecuencias, favoreció la historización del tiempo presente dentro de sus discursos y argumentaciones. En estos textos, por tanto, se produce una simbiosis muy particular entre lo histórico y lo político, en un doble intento de explicar o reformular el pasado polaco (sobre todo el más reciente) y de comprender la situación presente a fin de poder cambiarla. Parecía existir entre los intelectuales comprometidos con los movimientos de oposición el convencimiento más o menos explícito de que la forma de construir el futuro del país, de formular expectativas hacia adelante, dependía en buena medida de la forma en que la sociedad valorase y “recordase” su pasado. Pero no sólo creían, como *inteligenci* que eran, que podían influir o transformar la realidad actual de Polonia, o incluso la percepción que se tenía de su pasado, sino también el propio curso de su

revisión del pasado y la política de la memoria en la Polonia poscomunista”, *Historia del presente*, 8, 2006, esp. 165-166 y 169-171; Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 232-234.

¹⁸ Nos resulta particularmente atrayente la aproximación teórica de SOUTHGATE, Beverley: “Intellectual history/ history of ideas”, en BERGER, Stefan, FELDNER, Heiko y PASSMORE, Kevin (eds.): *Writing History. Theory and Practice*, London/ New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2010 (2003), 268-285.

historia de ahí en adelante, continuando, de esta forma, con una dilatada tradición de pensamiento histórico propia de la *intelligentsia* europeo-oriental. Por tanto, en esta investigación no sólo se trabaja con el “pasado”, sino que se han introducido las variables de “presente” y “futuro”: caminaremos, pues, sobre la delgada frontera intelectual que separa lo ocurrido, lo que está ocurriendo y lo que aún está por venir.

Consideraciones teóricas

1. El mito

Un término clave que manejaremos con asiduidad, y sobre el que trabajaremos siguiendo principalmente los referentes y percepciones de los propios autores polacos, es el de mito.

Hace mucho tiempo que el mito se ha separado de la idea decimonónica de la antropología pre-estructural. Desde hace décadas, se acepta casi de manera unánime que los mitos no son sólo propios de sociedades “primitivas” o “arcaicas” (tal y como las califica Mircea Eliade¹⁹), sino que también han formado y forman parte de las modernas²⁰. Sin embargo, mientras los mitos clásicos o premodernos son de tipo cosmológico o cosmogónico y se remontan a unos orígenes “anteriores al tiempo” y a la historia, el mito moderno sería, según Jan Ifversen, un mito político que legitimaría actos fundacionales producidos ya dentro del tiempo histórico. Mantendría, eso sí, su papel de referente normativo, pues expresa valores transhistóricos que sirven de guía a una sociedad determinada²¹.

La nación, colectivo sobre el que nos centramos, se cuenta entre los grupos generadores de mitos más destacados y estudiados en la Edad Contemporánea. Un mito nacional sería una construcción cognoscitiva que proporciona a una comunidad dada una identidad nacional. La recurrencia a los mitos resulta, en este caso, de la necesidad de los individuos de ubicarse a sí mismos dentro de la continuidad histórica de la nación, proporcionando un sentido de pertenencia a una comunidad duradera, suprahistórica. Con los mitos se trata de responder a las preguntas “¿cómo somos?” y “¿qué nos ha hecho como somos?”. Sacian, en otras palabras, la necesidad de “enraizamiento” y de entendimiento con los miembros de ese grupo, dado que ofrecen un modelo retrospectivo de participación en la vida social, basándose en enseñanzas, puntos de vista e imaginarios colectivos, y apelan por igual a una visión del pasado, del presente y del futuro en clave nacional²².

De una forma similar describe Stanisław Ossowski los “mitos étnicos” que, pudiendo tener como base mitos genealógicos o raciales, mantienen la cohesión interna del grupo social, así como las relaciones amistosas o antagónicas entre grupos étnicos u organizaciones políticas²³. Por tanto, para aproximarnos en esta investigación a los

¹⁹ ELIADE, Mircea: *El mito del eterno retorno: arquetipos y repetición*, Madrid, Alianza/ Emecé, 2000 (1951).

²⁰ SZACKA, Barbara: *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mīt*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2006, 70, 76-83.

²¹ IFVERSEN, Jan: “Myth in the Writing of European History”, in BERGER, Stefan and LORENZ, Chris (eds.): *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 453-454 y Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 84.

²² BABIUCH-LUXMOORE, Jolanta: *Portrety i autoportrety inteligencji polskiej*, Warszawa, Instytut Socjologii UW, 1989, 35-36.

²³ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 70-71, citando a OSSOWSKI, Stanisław: “Więź społeczna i dziedzictwo krwi”, *Dziela*, vol. 2, Warszawa, PWN, 1966, 129.

mitos nacionales polacos, será necesario conocer los mitos que han generado sus habitantes no sólo sobre Polonia, sino también acerca del otro, refiriéndonos tanto a Europa en general, como a los países que la integran o flanquean, en particular.

Si nos ceñimos al ámbito historiográfico, a la altura de los años 70 del siglo XX era habitual que los historiadores, en su necesidad de autodefinirse académica y profesionalmente, contrapusieran el pensamiento mítico al pensamiento histórico con el fin de trazar una frontera clara entre lo que aún es mito y el nacimiento de la historia como disciplina científica y de investigación. El mito supone, según esta concepción, remitirse al pasado como fuente de paradigmas; se le atribuye, además, una ausencia de linealidad temporal, la heterogeneidad de la realidad descrita y la sacralización del sujeto u objeto en los que se centra. Esto implica, a su vez, que la historia sea percibida como lo contrario, a saber, como una sucesión lineal de los acontecimientos²⁴.

La “mitificación” del pasado, es decir, el proceso por el que un conjunto de hechos se convierte en un conjunto de símbolos, modelos y precedentes, y que es frecuente en las popularizaciones de la historia y en las imágenes más habituales que se manejan del pasado, es tratada en muchas ocasiones como una amenaza al conocimiento científico contra la que el historiador se ve obligado a batallar²⁵. Así lo manifestaban, por ejemplo, historiadores polacos marxistas tan célebres como Witold Kula, que afirmaba que “cuando aparecen constantemente nuevos mitos (y la actividad humana creadora de mitos es inagotable) se abre ante el ser humano un hermoso campo de batalla para liberarse de ellos”²⁶; o como Jerzy Topolski, que define la historia de la historiografía como “la creación continua de mitos y los intentos de los historiadores por disolverlos”²⁷. El interés de la historiografía por los mitos, siguiendo estos parámetros, se basaría en el deseo de conocer y definir a un “enemigo” o “rival” para poder “defenderse” de él de manera efectiva²⁸. Los reproches que, desde esta perspectiva, se le hacen al pensamiento mítico con más asiduidad son su falta de correspondencia con la realidad (lo que explica la frecuente equiparación del mito con la mentira), que cumple un cometido ideológico, que sustituye la libertad de pensamiento y de la imaginación individuales por modelos y referentes de autoridad preestablecidos, que ya no es útil para describir y entender el mundo si se compara con otras formas de pensamiento desarrolladas más tarde, y que puede formar parte de una tradición dañina o negativa para una o varias comunidades²⁹.

²⁴ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 69.

²⁵ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 69.

²⁶ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 78, citando a KULA, Witold: *Rozważania o historii*, Warszawa, PWN, 1958, 27, traducción propia. Aprovecho para agradecer a Natalia Jarska su ayuda con las traducciones del polaco al español/inglés más complejas.

²⁷ DOMAŃSKA, Ewa: “(Re)creative Myths and Constructed History: The Case of Poland”, en STRÁTH, Bo (ed.), *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, Brussels, P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2000, 250, traducc. propia. Otra aproximación a la obra de Topolski en Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 87-89.

TOPOLSKI, Jerzy: “Historiografia jako tworzenie mitów i walka z nimi”, en TOPOLSKI, Jerzy, MOLKA, Witold y MAKOWSKI, Krzysztof (red.): *Ideologie, poglądy, mity w dziejach Polski i Europy XIX i XX wieku*, Poznań, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1991, 243-254. En una línea similar: TOPOLSKI, Jerzy: *Świat bez historii*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1998 (ed. ampliada y corregida, original de 1972); TOPOLSKI, Jerzy: *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2008 (1996). Otro ejemplo destacado de los años 70 es la obra del filósofo marxista Adam Schaff: SCHAFF, Adam: *Histoire et vérité: essai sur l'objectivité de la connaissance historique*, Paris, Éditions Anthropos, 1971. Mucho más reciente es GRABSKI, Andrzej F.: *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2000, 243-247.

²⁸ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 69; STOBIECKI, Rafał: *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Trio, 2007, 300-301.

²⁹ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 30-35, y Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 83.

Desde otros ámbitos, Ernst Cassirer o Stanisław Ossowski también creían que el pensamiento mítico y el pensamiento racional o discursivo eran fenómenos opuestos, aunque para Cassirer su coexistencia era posible³⁰. No obstante, Barbara Szacka apunta, no sin razón, que la propia ciencia puede convertirse en fuente de mitos cuando las sociedades de masas depositan su fe en ella³¹.

En esta línea, aprovechamos también para mostrar nuestras reservas acerca de la asociación exclusiva, en términos de percepción del paso tiempo, de lo histórico con lo lineal y de lo mítico con lo cíclico. Pues, ¿no es acaso el “progreso infinito”, la idea lineal por antonomasia, otro tipo de mito, tal y como se entendía desde el positivismo, o desde el marxismo³²? Por otro lado, si un discurso histórico hace hincapié en fenómenos que se repiten o repara en la existencia de determinados ciclos, ¿deja de ser “histórico” y pasa automáticamente a ser “mítico”? Desde aquí consideramos que no trabajamos con conceptos excluyentes, sino con categorías complementarias o, incluso, dependientes la una de la otra porque, si la realidad tal y como la experimentamos se compone de continuidades y cambios, ¿es posible prescindir de alguno de ellos en un relato? ¿Cómo puede percibirse lo que perdura si algo no cambia, o lo que cambia si no hay algo que sea duradero? ¿Cómo podríamos ser conscientes si no de la existencia del tiempo, aunque sea tan complejo de aprehender en su esencia y naturaleza como el ser humano mismo³³?

A partir de los años 70 y 80 del siglo XX, el giro cultural que experimentó la disciplina histórica, influida preferentemente por la antropología en su discurso, provocó una revalorización del mito, que empezó a contemplarse como un elemento complementario e incluso intrínseco a la propia escritura de la historia, en lugar de como algo ajeno y antagónico a ésta³⁴. Para Ewa Domańska, que apoya este enfoque, tanto la historia como la mitología, contempladas como géneros literarios, tienen su origen en el mito de la búsqueda de la identidad perdida³⁵: “El mito nos permite acceder a nuestra historia reprimida, y la historia es nuestro mito reprimido. De hecho, cuando los historiadores decidieron atacar al mito y expulsarlo de la historia, socavaron la base más importante para nuestro acercamiento al pasado”. Es el mito, dice Domańska, lo que nos ayuda a crear expectativas de futuro, a regenerar la moralidad de una comunidad, a curar, a volver a tener esperanza, y “es una expresión”, en suma, “del nivel más profundo de la historia”³⁶.

³⁰ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 73-74.

³¹ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 78-79.

³² El materialismo histórico contiene, de hecho, fuertes componentes míticos. Es reveladora, por ejemplo, la interpretación de los conflictos sociales de cualquier época histórica de Polonia como una lucha de clases, es decir, como antecedentes directos de lucha del proletariado liderada por el Partido Unificado de los Trabajadores Polacos, el PZPR. Grabski: *Zarys historii...*, 208. También se aprecia con claridad en la obra de la historiadora marxista Żanna Kormanowa, cuyo *sacrum* sería la ideología comunista. Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 254-272.

³³ La primera acepción de “tiempo” en el diccionario de la RAE es: “Duración de las cosas sujetas a mudanza”. Como si de una trampa lingüística se tratase, ni siquiera en una definición puede lo mudable separarse de una cierta “durabilidad”, por breve que ésta sea. Un apunte introductorio interesante sobre el tiempo como realidad objetiva o subjetiva en el marco de la filosofía lo encontramos en la Enciclopedia Britannica del año 1911, accesible *online*:

http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/SOU_SPACE_AND_TIME.html

³⁴ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 83, 86-92; MELLER, Marcin: “Rola myślenia o historii w ruchu «Solidarność» w latach 1980-1981”, en KULA, Marcin (pod red.): *Solidarność w ruchu, 1980-1981*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza NOWA, 2000, 220; STRÁTH, Bo: “Introduction. Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community”, en Stráth (ed.): *Myth and Memory...*, 19-46.

³⁵ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 259.

³⁶ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 253, traducc. propia.

Otros historiadores que han contribuido a revalorizar el mito suelen definirlo, a grandes rasgos, como una forma de conocimiento del pasado que recurre al saber histórico, pero que es distinta de la historia, dado que en el mito la aproximación a la verdad es algo secundario o incluso indiferente; que concierne a un único acontecimiento; que está basado en la fe y no es susceptible de ser verificado; que crea lazos sociales y, por último, que provee más información acerca de las añoranzas y del estado emocional de un colectivo en la actualidad que sobre el pasado en sí mismo³⁷.

Para Törnquist Plewa, que se inspira en las obras de Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade y Leszek Kołakowski, los mitos son concepciones (convicciones, visiones, creencias...) generadas en la conciencia de una determinada comunidad en respuesta a una fuerte necesidad emocional, y que se remiten a estratos de la conciencia situados más allá de lo racional³⁸. Tendrían cuatro rasgos distintivos, que podremos detectar en el pensamiento de la *inteligencia* polaca dentro de este trabajo.

En primer lugar, una base emocional colectiva. Si el mito refleja una verdad, es, ante todo, una verdad de la emoción compartida, no una creación puramente intelectual. La forma de expresar la emoción colectiva es casi tan importante como la emoción misma, a juicio de Törnquist Plewa, y suele manifestarse visual o verbalmente³⁹. Babiuch-Luxmoore, en cambio, considera menos importante verbalizar el contenido del mito que haberlo experimentado y vivido, dado que la verbalización introduciría ya una ordenación lógica, que “racionalizaría” lo irracional⁴⁰.

En segundo lugar, la transhistoricidad. El mito tiene la capacidad de funcionar como un modelo atemporal: es una forma de reconstruir el pasado, y a la vez proviene del pasado, pero impone su propia interpretación de los acontecimientos contemporáneos y además está enfocado hacia el futuro⁴¹. Contaría, según Babiuch-Luxmoore, con una doble estructura: por un lado, histórica, dado que se remonta a hechos pretéritos primigenios; y por otro, intemporal, porque “el mito no sólo satisface la necesidad de conocimiento histórico, sino también la necesidad de participación en valores que fueron, son y serán”⁴².

El mito puede moldear el pensamiento y también el comportamiento si se percibe como un programa de acción para el futuro, o una profecía, que legitima la acción presente enlazándola con el pasado. En los mitos se buscan analogías en el pasado para explicar el presente y prever el futuro; se generan entonces patrones y modelos en lugar de una secuencia histórica lógica de causa-efecto que recalque la especificidad de los acontecimientos históricos. La transhistoricidad del mito, en definitiva, es una parte muy importante de la conciencia histórica de una comunidad y contrasta con la historia entendida como una disciplina académica formalizada⁴³.

El tercer rasgo característico de los mitos sería su capacidad de trascender la experiencia empírica humana. Acudir al mito implica creer que pueden distinguirse patrones recurrentes en la experiencia humana que no sólo dan sentido al pasado, sino también al presente y al futuro. A la luz del mito, la historia cobra un significado especial, dado por Dios, por el destino, o derivado de la creencia en el cumplimiento de valores transhistóricos a lo largo de la historia. A través de él, por tanto, la historia de

³⁷ Szacka: *Czas przeszły...*, 92.

³⁸ TÖRNQUIST PLEWA, Barbara: *The Wheel of Polish Fortune. Myths in Polish Collective Consciousness during the First Years of Solidarity*, Lund, Lund University, 1992, 13.

³⁹ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 13.

⁴⁰ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 55.

⁴¹ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 14; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 18-23.

⁴² Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 20, citando a SZACKI, Jerzy: *Tradycja. Przegląd problematyki*, Warszawa, PWN, 1971, 264, traducc. propia.

⁴³ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 14.

un pueblo o comunidad puede verse como el cumplimiento de una determinada misión⁴⁴.

Por otro lado, el contenido del mito permite distintas lecturas e interpretaciones y no puede ser probado empíricamente; de ahí que no puedan aplicársele criterios como “verdadero” o “falso”. Manifestaría su existencia, eso sí, mediante su transmisión de generación en generación⁴⁵.

La cuarta y última característica del mito es su división cualitativa del mundo en *sacrum* y *profanum*. Las épocas, lugares, objetos, números o valores que son recordados pasan a formar parte de lo sacro, y aquellos que se descartan y olvidan, de lo profano. Al dar el estatus de *sacrum* a determinados períodos, cosas o valores, se les hace dignos de ser recordados por todos, contribuyendo a la transmisión intergeneracional de autoridad y de valores⁴⁶.

Desde el punto de vista de la cohesión y la dinámica sociales, los mitos cumplen al menos tres cometidos fundamentales: consolar, integrar y movilizar.

El consuelo permite dar sentido y esperanza a la comunidad, ya que ayuda a superar la aflicción y el sufrimiento mediante la justificación transhistórica de lo ocurrido⁴⁷.

Por otro lado, la integración crea un sentido de pertenencia a la comunidad, construyendo nexos no sólo entre los vivos, sino también con las generaciones pasadas y los ancestros. A través del mito, los miembros de una comunidad pueden comunicar sus ideales, miedos y esperanzas compartidos, y los símbolos facilitan, con su carga emocional, esa transmisión. Imaginar el pasado y participar de las tradiciones posibilitan la identificación grupal⁴⁸, como sucede en el caso nacional que nos concierne.

Por último, en lo que respecta a la movilización, los mitos juegan un papel importante en la formación y activación de la memoria colectiva. Las dimensiones moral y afectiva (*pathos*) del mito, alejadas de la mirada objetivizante de la ciencia y refractarias a ciertas formas de racionalidad (aunque eso no significa que sean irracionales), refuerzan la implicación y la responsabilidad de la comunidad hacia aquellos valores que este mito codifica, volviéndolos *sacrum*. El recuerdo de acontecimientos pasados relevantes o la planificación de un nuevo futuro, a su vez, ayudan a las personas a definir sus deberes actuales⁴⁹. Es decir, los mitos pueden ser representaciones enfocadas primordialmente tanto hacia el futuro como hacia el pasado, pero en cualquier caso tienen el poder de hacernos actuar y de estimularnos para transformar el mundo que nos rodea. También expresan el deseo, en palabras de Leszek Kołakowski, de que en el transcurso del tiempo no sólo se sucedan los cambios, sino que también haya lugar para las permanencias y los cúmulos; algo, en suma, que permita creer a esa colectividad que lo pasado está contenido en aquello que ha conseguido preservarse, y que los hechos no son sólo hechos, sino pequeñas

⁴⁴ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 15.

⁴⁵ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 55.

⁴⁶ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 15.

⁴⁷ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 16; Stráth: “Introduction...”, 42 y WHITE, Hayden: “Catastrophe, Communal Memory and Mythic Discourse: The Uses of Myth in the Reconstruction of Society”, en Stráth (ed.): *Myth and Memory...*, 49-74.

⁴⁸ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 16-17; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 29-30 y 36.

⁴⁹ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 17; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 29; Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 456.

aportaciones de cada generación al mundo de los valores, que se salvaguardan aunque no sea posible retroceder literalmente en el tiempo⁵⁰.

El mito, además de expresar valores, también puede desempeñar un cometido ideológico en caso de que una determinada interpretación de éste se vuelva cerrada, es decir, si se convierte en un argumento para legitimar e imponer una visión igualmente específica y obligada de la realidad, dejando, de esta forma, de favorecer el entendimiento social⁵¹.

No obstante, las fronteras entre expresión de valores e ideología no son, en este sentido, del todo precisas; lo veremos con toda claridad en nuestro caso si nos apoyamos en la distinción, basada en las emociones, propuesta por Kołakowski. Según este autor, los mitos que expresan valores son aquellos que codifican el compromiso, el deber y la obligación, y que hacen referencia a una situación de partida mítica para facilitar la comprensión del mundo actual. Los valores a los que se remiten vendrían ya dados, no sería necesario cambiarlos o añadirles nada; se trataría, simplemente, de aceptarlos y salvaguardarlos. En cambio, los mitos que cumplen una función ideológica codificarían aspiraciones o pretensiones, ofreciendo perspectivas, organizando el descontento o alimentando emociones relacionadas con la sensación de perjuicio innecesario. Se orientan hacia una utopía futura para satisfacer las esperanzas de una comunidad, y los elementos del pasado servirían de sanción añadida para estas aspiraciones⁵². Al margen de la connotación negativa que le confieren Kołakowski y Babiuch-Luxmoore, esta función ideológica, de hecho, quedaría englobada dentro de las características de los mitos propuestas por Barbara Törnquist Plewa, para quien es aquél un aspecto intrínseco, y no opcional, de los mitos, algo que en principio ratificarían los resultados de nuestra investigación.

Desde el ámbito de la filosofía y la historia de las religiones, Mircea Eliade sugiere la existencia de dos teorías del “Gran Tiempo” de carácter cíclico en las cosmogonías de las civilizaciones arcaicas: la tradicional, fundamentada en una regeneración periódica infinita, aunque ninguna cultura la haya formulado de forma clara e inequívoca, y la “moderna”, sustento, entre otras, de la religión cristiana. Ambas concepciones expresan, según el autor, una actitud antihistórica, siempre y cuando se entienda por “histórico” una progresión lineal e irrepetible del tiempo. Por una parte, la percepción tradicional intenta rechazar, ignorar o abolir la historia a través de la repetición y la regeneración periódica del tiempo, que alimenta la conciencia de estar viviendo un eterno presente. En la percepción mesiánica, por otro lado, la clave está en el futuro, pues el peso de la historia se soporta sólo porque se sabe que ésta algún día acabará; es decir, en un tiempo que aún está por venir se producirá una sola regeneración que restablecerá el paraíso primigenio, cerrando, de esta forma, un ciclo único. Por tanto, la alternancia de momentos *sacrum* y *profanum* que contienen ambas teorías asegura un eventual retorno del “tiempo sagrado” a la comunidad que ha experimentado una derrota o catástrofe, proporcionándole consuelo y el convencimiento de que la “edad de oro” es algo recuperable y repetible, infinitas veces en la orientación tradicional, y una sola vez en la escatológica de tiempo finito⁵³.

Eliade señala que, pese a la emergencia y predominio de nuevas teorías basadas en el progreso lineal de la historia entre los siglos XVII y XIX, estos esquemas cíclicos

⁵⁰ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 29, citando a KOŁAKOWSKI, Leszek: *Obecność mitu*, Paryż, Instytut Literacki, 1972, 16.

⁵¹ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 26-27.

⁵² Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 27-28, citando a Kołakowski: *Obecność mitu*, 95-96; también en Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 254.

⁵³ Eliade: *El mito del eterno...*, 110-112; Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 16.

nunca han desaparecido del todo a lo largo de la historia del pensamiento, en buena parte gracias al desarrollo científico de la astronomía durante ese mismo período, que dejaba atrás los viejos postulados astrológicos. Durante el siglo XX, además, estos patrones se retoman o introducen en muchos campos académicos, tales como la economía política (rehabilitación de las nociones de ciclo, fluctuación u oscilación periódica), la filosofía (Nietzsche y el mito del eterno retorno) o la filosofía de la historia (dedicación de Spengler o Toynbee al problema de la periodicidad)⁵⁴.

Pero Eliade no se detiene ahí: también argumenta que buena parte de la población de Europa, y por supuesto de otros continentes, maneja aún, a la altura de los años 50 del siglo XX (cuando publica *El mito del eterno retorno*), una perspectiva anti-historicista del tiempo fundamentada en una regeneración cíclica infinita, que no sólo va asociada a las sociedades tradicionales campesinas, sino también en general a aquellos países cuya trayectoria histórica ha sido especialmente complicada y dolorosa:

el ‘historicismo’ fue creado y profesado ante todo por pensadores que pertenecían a naciones para las cuales la historia jamás fue un *terror continuo*. Esos pensadores quizá hubieran adoptado otra perspectiva si hubiesen pertenecido a naciones señaladas por la ‘fatalidad de la historia’. En todo caso, quisiéramos saber si la teoría según la cual todo lo que sucede está ‘bien’ justamente *porque sucedió* habría podido ser abrazada alegremente por los pensadores de los países bálticos, de los Balcanes, o de las colonias.⁵⁵

Es decir, recurrir a mitos de tipo cíclico y rechazar el historicismo no sólo sería propio de sociedades “arcaicas”, sobre las que el autor trabaja principalmente, sino también de aquellas naciones modernas que se han sentido vejadas o injustamente tratadas de forma prolongada a lo largo de su historia. ¿Podríamos añadir, entre las que menciona Eliade, a Polonia? Ya desde aquí adelantamos que la respuesta es, sin duda, afirmativa. La conciencia histórica polaca tiene un origen traumático que se sitúa en el último cuarto del siglo XVIII: a raíz de los repartos entre los imperios ruso, austriaco y prusiano de una República de las Dos Naciones⁵⁶ debilitada y en decadencia (1772, 1793 y 1795), Polonia desapareció, no sin resistencia, del mapa de los Estados europeos, perdió su soberanía y su territorio quedó desmembrado durante más de 120 años. A partir de entonces, y sobre todo durante una época romántica jalonada por rebeliones y levantamientos, la realidad, y por extensión la historia, se volvió sumamente hostil y dolorosa a ojos de muchos polacos, y su cultura fue transformándose, en palabras de Ewa Domańska, en una “cultura de la herida” (*wound culture*), basada en experiencias de trauma, sufrimiento, victimismo y melancolía, cuyas huellas pueden rastrearse prácticamente hasta la actualidad, pues forman parte intrínseca de su acervo mítico⁵⁷. Sólo una autopercepción trágica, doliente, de la historia polaca muy arraigada y extendida, y que comparten algunos de nuestros intelectuales en los años 70 y 80 del siglo XX, explicaría la reacción contraria de otros, que aspiraban a la “normalidad” en vez de a la “excepcionalidad”. Así lo manifestó durante una de sus últimas entrevistas Stefan Kisielewski, una de las figuras más destacadas que estudiaremos:

⁵⁴ Eliade: *El mito del eterno...*, 137-140.

⁵⁵ Eliade: *El mito del eterno...*, 146, negrita mía, nota al pie. Véase también Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, en Mikułowski Pomorski (pod red.): *Inteligencja...*, 27.

⁵⁶ La República de las Dos Naciones (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów) fue resultado de la unión del Reino de Polonia y el Ducado de Lituania en 1569. Jan Kieniewicz, en su obra en castellano *Historia de Polonia*, la denomina «la Rzeczpospolita de “Dos Naciones”». KIENIEWICZ, Jan: *Historia de Polonia*, México D.F., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001.

⁵⁷ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 254-255.

... nunca nos ha faltado gente que percibe en el destino de Polonia señales mesiánicas, algún tipo de rol especial que nuestro país debería desempeñar en la historia mundial. (...) Es una carga para la nación de la que debemos renegar cuanto antes. Renegar – y buscar una Polonia normal, una Polonia como otros países del mundo.⁵⁸

Una sociedad recurre a sus mitos especialmente en períodos convulsos e inestables, de malestar social, crisis, revoluciones o levantamientos, y en lugares donde la población se considera “víctima de la historia”. Por tanto, al tener un detonante o catalizador común, conciencia histórica y mito se entrelazan y comparten escenario casi desde su mismo origen durante la Edad Contemporánea en casos como el polaco:

En esos tiempos, la comunidad es consciente de su participación en la historia, en hechos de gran importancia, y además tiene la sensación de estar ejerciendo una influencia real en el curso de los acontecimientos. Esta sensación genera la necesidad de expresar una voluntad común, la necesidad de configurar nuevos comportamientos y también de renovar los viejos, firmemente asentados en la conciencia social. Mientras la sociedad altera el orden establecido, también tiene la necesidad de una integración particularmente fuerte para incrementar la fuerza de su protesta. En esos momentos el mito es la solución a estas fuertes emociones y necesidades colectivas.⁵⁹

En palabras de Hayden White, los desastres conllevan situaciones a las que una comunidad no puede hacer frente con sus recursos cognitivos y morales habituales. En su lugar, y con la intención de (re)constituirse, la comunidad integra esos desastres en un discurso mítico, creándose una narrativa dramática de tipo moral donde el relato de los hechos (transformados en “catástrofe”) girará en torno a las ideas de virtud y justicia, en vez de basarse en una explicación causal⁶⁰.

Conviene recordar que, además de utilizarse en momentos trágicos, los propios mitos suelen narrar acontecimientos de una gran carga dramática. Los mitos políticos modernos, en los que cualquier creación o fundación se entiende como un nuevo comienzo, escenifican frecuentemente un choque violento con el antiguo sistema que, en su forma más radical, se representa a través de un mito revolucionario. Este nuevo comienzo puede ser presentado como resultado de una acción violenta deliberada o como un destino inevitable⁶¹. De hecho, la catástrofe cíclica, según Ewa Domańska, es vista como algo bastante normal en Polonia, y el “mito del eterno retorno” no ha dejado de ser actual, hasta el punto de convertirse en una especie de arquetipo o metarrelato en el país. La reiteración a lo largo de su historia del ciclo de derrotas militares, partición política, liberación y renacimiento hace que la “muerte” sea vista por muchos polacos como una fase ineludible e indispensable para una posterior regeneración⁶². Jan Ifversen, en cambio, considera que también puede concebirse una puesta en escena del mito en circunstancias menos extremas, como en acciones políticas orientadas hacia el futuro, cuando el mito puede ayudar a reducir la sensación de incertidumbre⁶³.

Más que una rebelión contra el tiempo histórico, Eliade interpreta la revalorización del mito de periodicidad cíclica en el siglo XX como una tentativa de los contemporáneos de “... reintegrar ese tiempo histórico, cargado de experiencia humana, en el tiempo cósmico, cíclico e infinito”⁶⁴, en suma, como un deseo colectivo de

⁵⁸ *Testament Kisiela. Ze Stefanem Kisielewskim rozmawia Piotr Gabryel*, Poznań, Agencja Wydawniczo-Reklamowa Wprost, 1992, 47, conversación del 6-IX-1990, traducc. propia.

⁵⁹ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 17, traducc. propia.

⁶⁰ White: “Catastrophe, Communal...”, 49-53.

⁶¹ Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 456.

⁶² Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 256.

⁶³ Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 456.

⁶⁴ Eliade: *El mito del eterno...*, 147.

trascendencia, de dar sentido a la vida humana y a los sufrimientos padecidos hasta hoy. No obstante, mientras el grueso de la sociedad se desenvolvería con categorías míticas en su vida cotidiana sin apenas cuestionarlas, las élites sociales, como la *inteligencja* en Polonia, se encontrarían ante el dilema de continuar empleando los esquemas míticos, y satisfacer así su afán de pasar a la posteridad (en clave nacional o como grupo elitista), o bien optar por una lectura más “científica”, compleja o historicista del paso del tiempo, desprovista de una respuesta reconfortante ante lo incierto, lo incomprensible y lo fortuito:

... en primer lugar es a las élites a las que se plantea el problema, puesto que son las únicas obligadas, cada vez con mayor rigor, a tener conciencia de su situación histórica. Ciertamente, el cristianismo y la filosofía escatológica de la historia no han dejado de satisfacer a una parte considerable de esas élites. Hasta cierto punto, también puede decirse que el marxismo —sobre todo en sus formas populares— constituye para algunos una defensa contra el terror a la historia. Sólo la posición historicista, en todas sus variedades y en todos sus matices —desde el ‘destino’ de Nietzsche hasta la ‘temporalidad’ de Heidegger— sigue desarmada.⁶⁵

Dicho de otra manera, tanto la historia como el mito forman parte del *corpus* de tradiciones que constituyen la “identidad narrativa/ discursiva de una cultura” y, en consecuencia, desde una perspectiva moderna, las funciones racionalizadora y organizadora del mito deben contemplarse como un discurso más que compite y se compagina con otras formas distintas de ordenación y racionalización⁶⁶.

Esta cuestión nos remite a un dilema básico dentro de la disciplina histórica que, pese a ser de índole general, destaca aún más en el contexto polaco debido a sus especificidades políticas (ausencia de Estado durante más de un siglo, posterior inclusión en la órbita soviética...). Se trata, nada más y nada menos, de dilucidar la función de la historiografía y, por tanto, de los propios historiadores. ¿La investigación histórica debe centrarse únicamente en preguntas y explicaciones académicas, o también debe prestar atención a las necesidades y demandas de las comunidades no académicas de las que forman parte los historiadores (sociedad, nación, otros colectivos)? Ambos puntos de vista proceden de dos tradiciones historiográficas del siglo XIX: la rankeana, que considera al historiador un observador neutral de la realidad y apoya la búsqueda imparcial de la verdad, y la idealista-romántica, que hace hincapié en el liderazgo espiritual de la nación, y de la que Joachim Lelewel (1786-1861) fue un destacado exponente en el caso polaco⁶⁷. Siguiendo esta última línea, algunas personas entienden la escritura histórica como una “misión” y un deber de los historiadores hacia la sociedad, a la que hay que educar en valores “nacionales” (independencia, libertad, patriotismo); en Polonia, esta postura se materializa a día de hoy, por ejemplo, en el Instituto de Memoria Nacional (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, IPN⁶⁸), y sería contraria a la visión “cientifista” y “objetivista” que trata de luchar contra una “mitificación de la historia” sin tomar en consideración el giro cultural experimentado por las

⁶⁵ Eliade: *El mito del eterno...*, 146.

⁶⁶ RICOEUR, Paul: “Myth and History”, en ELIADE, Mircea (ed. en jefe): *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, New York, Macmillan, 1987, 274 y 276; Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 455.

⁶⁷ STANLEY, John D.: “Joachim Lelewel (1786-1861)”, en BROCK, Peter, STANLEY, John D. y WRÓBEL, Piotr J. (eds.): *Nation and History. Polish Historians from the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Toronto/ Buffalo/ London, University of Toronto Press, 2006: 52-84; WIERZBICKI, Andrzej: “Kategoria charakteru narodowego w twórczości Joachima Lelewela”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 1, 1986, 43-73; KIENIEWICZ, Jan: “Dlaczego trzeba czytać Lelewela?”, prólogo a una nueva edición de la obra clásica de Joachim Lelewel: *Historyczna paralela Hiszpanii z Polską w XVI, XVII, XVIII wieku*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo DiG/ OBTA, 2006.

⁶⁸ Se puede consultar su página web en inglés: <http://ipn.gov.pl/en>

Humanidades en las últimas décadas. No obstante, ambas concepciones forman parte de la práctica historiográfica cotidiana y, pese a su aparente oposición, interactúan con frecuencia⁶⁹.

En una aproximación similar a la de Eliade, pero con matices, Babiuch-Luxmoore distingue tres visiones o maneras de relacionarse con el pasado y de experimentar el tiempo entre los *inteligenci* polacos:

En primer lugar, la “visión histórica” concibe el pasado, el presente y el futuro como esferas claramente diferenciadas, aunque interconectadas en cierto modo. En esta concepción del tiempo, el cambio es el factor fundamental. El pasado se percibe como algo singular, irrepetible y cerrado, y no como un nicho de enseñanzas morales.

La “visión tradicional”, en cambio, se orienta hacia la duración. En este sentido, la definición de “tradición” se aproxima a la de mito, pues es la forma en que una colectividad experimenta su pasado mediante la transformación de hechos pretéritos, ricos en significados, en un valor del presente con significado único. El conjunto de símbolos, modelos y precedentes que constituyen la tradición se fundan principalmente en la fe y la permanencia, mientras que la historia lo hace en la búsqueda de conocimiento y la descripción del pasado y su mutabilidad. Por tanto, desde la perspectiva “tradicional”, las acciones y hechos pretéritos se convierten en modelos, y se trata de hallar en el pasado valores absolutos y duraderos que sirvan de inspiración a los contemporáneos y sean un referente socio-moral inalterable en épocas difíciles o cambiantes. El esquema temporal propio de esta postura es el tiempo mítico, entendido como un pasado que no deja de transcurrir y que se reproduce en el presente.

Por último, la “visión indiferente hacia el pasado” prefiere, como su mismo nombre indica, concentrarse exclusivamente en el presente y en el futuro y construir nuevos modelos de comportamiento, evitando la reflexión sobre el pasado⁷⁰.

Lejos de lo que pueda parecer, dentro de los discursos de la *inteligencja* polaca las dos primeras percepciones del pasado no son totalmente antagónicas y se encuentran, en algunas ocasiones, entremezcladas. En otras palabras, a lo largo de esta disertación veremos cómo la disyuntiva o dilema ante el que se encontró la élite intelectual en Polonia, plasmado más arriba (y sobre el que volveremos posteriormente), también se resolvió, en ciertos casos, alternando propuestas de continuidad y de cambio. Además, la consciencia de la propia situación y participación en la historia que mencionan tanto Törnquist Plewa como Eliade será, aplicado a nuestro objeto de estudio, uno de los ejes temáticos principales que desarrollaremos en la investigación y que hemos denominado, como veremos más adelante, “conciencia histórica” e “historización del tiempo presente”.

Pero la *inteligencja* no sólo recurrió a estructuras míticas para reelaborar el presente y el futuro en sus discursos, sino que la propia figura del *inteligent* o intelectual tiene la categoría de mito nacional en la conciencia histórica polaca, lo que le da una entidad particular y específica a este caso.

2. Intelectualidad/ Intelligentsia-inteligencja

En los sujetos de nuestra investigación confluyen dos identidades colectivas estrechamente ligadas entre sí que conviene estudiar con mayor profundidad. En primer lugar, examinaremos los conceptos de “*inteligencja*” e “intelectualidad”, tratando de

⁶⁹ Wawrzyniak: “History and Memory...”, 134-136, 138-139; Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 300-306; Stráth: “Introduction...”, esp. 30-31.

⁷⁰ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 59-63, basándose en Szacki: *Tradycja, przegląd...*

proponer una definición para el caso que nos ocupa y de abordar su entronque (y evolución en paralelo) con la *intelligentsia* rusa⁷¹ que, entre otras cuestiones, comprende su estrecha y especial relación con el pensamiento histórico y el progreso, así como con las ideas de nación, verdad, ética y moral, además de su sensación de alienación y de su relación ambigua (y, en muchas ocasiones, conflictiva) con el poder y el Estado, lo que nos llevará a ocuparnos de la “oposición/ disidencia”, el segundo término definitorio sobre el que nos detendremos.

La idea de *inteligencja* o *inteligencność* ha estado presente en el discurso público polaco desde hace aproximadamente 150 años, aunque es probable que comenzase a cristalizar como grupo social medio siglo antes, a finales del XVIII⁷². Fue a partir de entonces cuando, según Krystyna Zienkowska, se produjeron cambios en la forma de crear opinión, vinculados a la invención y expansión de medios más eficaces de transmitir la información, como la prensa, y además se establecieron aparatos gubernamentales bastante centralizados de tipo estatal que se hicieron cargo de la educación de su población, iniciando así su proceso de secularización. En este contexto histórico, tres grupos profesionales se perfilaron como *inteligenci* en potencia: en primer lugar, personas de elevada formación que se dedicaban a algún tipo de oficio literario, y que formaron un nuevo estamento libre a raíz de la gradual desaparición del mecenazgo; en segundo lugar, los profesores, dado que las reformas educativas tendieron a unificar los criterios de búsqueda de personas con conocimientos y moral para trabajar para el Estado y aceptar sus normas, y en tercer lugar, los funcionarios del nuevo aparato estatal. Las tendencias que compartirían e identificarían a los integrantes de la *inteligencja* en esa época comprenden, entre otras, la tendencia al empleo de un léxico nacional-patriótico; una tendencia igualitarista, expresada en su aspiración por democratizar posturas y puntos de vista, y relacionada con la progresiva fusión de la burguesía con la nobleza empobrecida; y una acentuada tendencia al idealismo político⁷³.

Se cree que el término *intelligentsia* procede de la Rusia de Catalina la Grande. Al parecer, Johann Georg Schwarz, el alemán que transformó la masonería rusa a finales del siglo XVIII, lo empleó por vez primera en el sentido que tiene el vocablo latino *intelligentia* (inteligencia), pero le dio su transcripción rusa característica (*intelligentsiia*) y un halo de autoridad o poder especial que perduraría hasta el presente⁷⁴. Ivan Aksakov fue, por lo visto, el que introdujo el concepto como palabra de uso común en el Imperio ruso en la década de 1860⁷⁵, mientras que en tierras polacas apareció por primera vez en el foro público dentro de una obra de Karol Libelt, ideólogo del “trabajo orgánico” (*praca organiczna*) en la región de Wielkopolska, titulada *O miłości ojczyzny* (1844), que pronto se convirtió en el catecismo del patriota ilustrado⁷⁶.

En ella, por ejemplo, Libelt afirma que la educación, elemento separador y distintivo, otorga a la *inteligencja* un papel de liderazgo en el que tiene tanto el

⁷¹ *Inteligencja* e *intelligentsia* significan lo mismo, sólo que el primer término sigue la ortografía y la fonética polacas, y el segundo las rusas, y es el que se emplea de forma habitual en el mundo académico. En esta Introducción emplearemos la grafía rusa cuando hablemos del fenómeno de la *intelligentsia* en general, y la grafía polaca cuando tratemos exclusivamente el caso polaco, o bien otra palabra derivada: *inteligent* (pl. *inteligenci*), que hace referencia a un miembro de la *inteligencja*.

⁷² CHOJNOWSKI, Maciej y PALSKA, Hanna: “O wielopostaciowość pojęcia ‘inteligencja’”, en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 19, 23.

⁷³ Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 22-23.

⁷⁴ BILLINGTON, James H.: *El icono y el hacha: una historia interpretativa de la cultura rusa*, Madrid, Siglo XXI de España, 2012, 367.

⁷⁵ Billington: *El icono...*, 368, nota 101.

⁷⁶ MICIŃSKA, Magdalena: “Dzieje inteligencji polskiej do odzyskania niepodległości w 1918”, en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 46.

privilegio de ser guía de la nación, como la obligación de ser fiel a la comunidad que depende de ella⁷⁷. Los *inteligenci* del siglo XIX formaban, por tanto, un estrato social educado que se ganaba la vida con su trabajo intelectual, pero casi desde el comienzo se les atribuyó, además, el cumplimiento de una importante misión social y nacional, con lo que los lazos que les unían rebasaron ampliamente la esfera profesional⁷⁸. A partir de entonces, la problemática de sus deberes y responsabilidades hacia el resto de la sociedad pasó a ser objeto de discusión habitual entre la *inteligencja*⁷⁹.

Si nos basamos en estudios sociológicos recientes (2005, 2008), la *inteligencja*⁸⁰ englobaría a aquellas personas que cuentan con una posición similar en la estructura social, estrechamente vinculada a su profesión y a su formación superior, y caracterizada, además, por determinadas posturas, orientaciones, estilos de vida y *etos* semejantes (si bien variables en el tiempo) que también involucran de diversas formas al resto de grupos sociales⁸¹. Al igual que sucede con otros colectivos como la burguesía o la clase obrera, la definición de sus límites es compleja y continúa siendo un tema de debate importante en diversos campos académicos⁸².

Partiendo de la clasificación de la *inteligencja*, elaborada por Henryk Domański, en seis categorías profesionales no excluyentes, de acuerdo con sus funciones reales en la sociedad polaca⁸³, podemos extraer una definición bastante precisa del sujeto colectivo de la presente investigación, además de plantear una serie de reflexiones y preguntas abiertas acerca de este término:

Según el autor, una parte de la *inteligencja* desempeña puestos relacionados con su rol de organizadora, como son los de dirección y liderazgo, entre los que se incluyen las elites gubernamentales tanto a nivel local como nacional. Domański considera que los miembros de este colectivo han sido siempre, incluso después de 1989, la fuente principal de la que se ha nutrido la clase política polaca.

En segundo lugar, la parte más numerosa de la *inteligencja* la integran especialistas procedentes de distintas esferas de producción y del sector servicios. Serían el foco principal de modernidad en el país y los encargados de cubrir las necesidades indispensables de la vida cotidiana de la población. Esta categoría incluye a ingenieros, profesores, médicos, abogados o científicos, cuya profesionalización se habría incrementado después de 1989.

Por otra parte, la alta burocracia y los servicios de expertos que trabajan para el Estado formarían un tercer grupo profesional.

En cuarto lugar, los intelectuales constituirían un nivel superior de la *inteligencja*. Escritores, estudiosos, científicos, periodistas de prestigio, y también los artistas en parte, darían voz en el foro público a este colectivo en su conjunto a través de los diversos medios de comunicación (radio, televisión, prensa, libros, Internet...). Podríamos considerar a esta subcategoría como una élite social y simbólica con una

⁷⁷ Chojnowski y Palska: "O wielopostaciowość...", 20.

⁷⁸ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 11.

⁷⁹ Chojnowski y Palska: "O wielopostaciowość...", 21.

⁸⁰ Agradezco los comentarios y recomendaciones que me hicieron sobre esta cuestión José M. Faraldo y los participantes del Seminario del Instituto de Historia de la Universidad de Łódź durante la sesión celebrada en noviembre de 2012, en especial Rafał Stobiecki y Marzena Iwańska.

⁸¹ Domański: "Wstęp", en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 15 y Mikułowski Pomorski: "Wprowadzenie...", 27.

⁸² Chojnowski y Palska: "O wielopostaciowość...", 19.

⁸³ Domański: "Wstęp", 11-15.

influencia decisiva en la vida pública, en tanto en cuanto ejerce un grado considerable de autoridad moral sobre la población y es “creadora de opinión”⁸⁴.

Una de sus actividades más típicas ha sido siempre la crítica a la clase gobernante, independientemente del tipo de sistema político vigente⁸⁵. Según Janusz Żarnowski, la “*inteligencja*-intelectualidad” rara vez ha mantenido una posición neutral: en los períodos represivos álgidos de la época estalinista, por ejemplo, sus miembros se sentían prácticamente obligados a autodefinirse ideológicamente de manera pública. El ser conocidos por todos, en este caso, les beneficiaba a la hora de manifestar su opinión, pues los gobiernos de la PRL siempre temieron la repercusión mediática que produciría su persecución. Disfrutaban, por tanto, de una cierta (aunque limitada) “garantía” de la que no disponía la *inteligencja* anónima⁸⁶.

En su clasificación, Henryk Domański no sólo emplea el concepto de intelectual como una subcategoría de la *inteligencja*, sino que además lo considera muy similar para todos los sistemas sociales, rompiendo así con la clásica división (que trataremos más adelante) que asocia el término *inteligencja* únicamente con Europa Oriental y a la intelectualidad con los países occidentales. Otros autores también señalan las semejanzas o paralelismos, en el plano profesional y desde un punto de vista sociológico, entre intelectualidad e *inteligencja*, pero situándolas a un mismo nivel y sin hacerlas totalmente equiparables: por un lado, Hanna Palska denomina “*inteligencja* creadora” (*inteligencja twórcza*), que considera próxima en significado a “intelectual”, a una élite dentro de la *inteligencja* encargada de la creación cultural; en otras palabras, comprende a todas aquellas personas que, a través de su actividad, participan en la formación de la conciencia y de la mentalidad del resto de la sociedad, construyendo una base o jerarquía de valores y despertando la sensibilidad estética⁸⁷. Por otro lado, Jerzy Mikułowski Pomorski opina que tanto la *inteligencja* como la intelectualidad pueden dividirse profesionalmente en tres grupos: creadores de ideas, funcionarios o trabajadores de la administración (*clerks*) y *managers* o cargos relacionados con la economía⁸⁸.

Al estar tratando, en la división de Domański, con grupos funcionales no excluyentes entre sí, puede producirse el solapamiento de dos categorías aparentemente antagónicas: un “*intelligent*-intelectual” crítico con el poder político y el Estado que, en un momento determinado, pasa a desempeñar un cargo en la vida política.

Quizás este patrón se reproduce con más frecuencia durante una fase de transición a la democracia, como sucedió en Polonia y otros países de Europa Centro-Oriental a finales de los años 80 y principios de los 90, cuando una serie de intelectuales prominentes, que anteriormente habían sido la “contra-élite” de la oposición, fueron los

⁸⁴ Rafael Rojas, en su obra sobre los intelectuales cubanos, entiende por “intelectual”: “... a aquellos creadores de una cultura que, más allá de la producción de sentido que practican sus poéticas, intervienen en la esfera pública con ideas u opiniones”; Rojas: *Tumbas sin sosiego...*, 17. También BOURDIEU, Pierre: *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991; MARÍAS, Julián: *El intelectual y su mundo*, Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1968 (1956), esp. “El problema de la libertad intelectual”, 11-38.

⁸⁵ Zuzowski: *Political Dissent...*, 4-7; DAVIES, Norman: *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, London, Clarendon Press, 1984, 394; LEPENIES, Wolf: *¿Qué es un intelectual europeo? Los intelectuales y la política del espíritu en la historia europea. Cátedra Europea del Colegio de Francia, 1991-1992*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg/ Círculo de Lectores, 2008, 28-30.

⁸⁶ ŻARNOWSKI, Janusz: “Inteligencja w Polsce niepodległej, w epoce komunizmu i na progu transformacji”, en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 101; ARKUSZEWSKI, Wojciech: “The Elitist Opposition”, in WEDEL, Janine R. (ed.): *The Unplanned Society. Poland During and After Communism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, 232.

⁸⁷ PALSKA, Hanna: “Inteligencja twórcza w latach 1948-1956”, en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 160.

⁸⁸ Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 16.

encargados de iniciar una nueva etapa política, pasando de la clandestinidad, la represión y las propuestas alternativas a la oficialidad⁸⁹.

Se encuentra bastante extendida la idea de que, a partir de entonces, la trayectoria política de estas personas fue corta y decepcionante: al parecer, eran demasiado independientes o, sencillamente, se volvieron demasiado “incómodos” para ser buenos políticos, y sus ideas supuestamente “idealistas” y “nobles”, tan valiosas durante el período comunista, no tenían ya cabida en la política cotidiana y la *Realpolitik* de un régimen democrático estable, con lo que el retorno a su posición social marginal de origen fue algo inevitable. Sin embargo, la realidad dista mucho de parecerse a este relato, ya que los intelectuales polacos siempre han sido una élite social; por tanto, rara vez se han encontrado en una posición “marginal”, ni antes ni después del momento álgido de la oposición al comunismo en el país. Al comienzo del régimen de la PRL, la *inteligencia* abiertamente opositora no abundaba, pero siempre gozó de cierto prestigio a pesar de las persecuciones y difamaciones del gobierno. Por otro lado, después de 1989, personas como Jacek Kuroń, Bronisław Geremek o Adam Michnik contribuyeron de manera decisiva a construir y consolidar una cultura política y nuevas instituciones democráticas en Polonia gracias a sus iniciativas, a su compromiso y a los puestos que desempeñaron. Algunos de ellos pudieron desarrollar una dilatada carrera política; otros, en cambio, abandonaron sus responsabilidades en la primera línea del poder más pronto que tarde, pero continuaron participando activamente en la vida pública y manteniendo posiciones de liderazgo en asociaciones independientes, tal y como habían hecho antes⁹⁰.

Pese a esto, hay estudiosos y pensadores que creen que existe una incompatibilidad radical entre el talante de un *intelligent* y el de un político profesional. Podríamos utilizar el paralelo cercano de un escritor como Javier Cercas, quien resume de manera muy gráfica este punto de vista:

... en mi opinión, un político es lo contrario de un escritor (o de un novelista), y (...) por eso los buenos políticos suelen ser tan malos escritores, y los buenos escritores, tan malos políticos. Un buen político toma un problema complejo y lo reduce a sus líneas esenciales para solucionarlo por la vía más sencilla y más rápida; un buen escritor, en cambio, toma un problema complejo y lo vuelve más complejo todavía o (esto sólo lo hacen los mejores) convierte en un problema aquello que antes no era un problema para nadie. Un buen político toma una pregunta y le da una respuesta contundente; un buen escritor no hace más que formular preguntas sin respuesta (o con una respuesta ambigua, contradictoria, esencialmente irónica). Un buen político es un seductor; un buen escritor es un incordio, un rompepelotas o, como dice Vargas Llosa, un aguafiestas.⁹¹

Timothy Garton Ash, experto en historia de Europa Centro-Oriental, comparte en buena medida el punto de vista de Cercas, pero reformula el problema introduciendo explícitamente en la ecuación el término “verdad”, entendida aquí como una categoría moral, tal y como se empleó con mucha frecuencia en los círculos opositores del Bloque del Este, y sobre la que ahondaremos tanto en esta introducción como a lo largo de todo el trabajo. En este sentido, según Garton Ash, más que de incompatibilidad, cabría hablar de rivalidad natural entre políticos e intelectuales, porque mientras los primeros dirían “verdades a medias” para defender una causa concreta, los segundos aspirarían a contar toda la verdad, y considerarían que es su deber denunciar públicamente cualquier falsedad e intento de manipulación⁹².

⁸⁹ Barlińska: *La sociedad civil...*, 379.

⁹⁰ Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 355-357.

⁹¹ CERCAS, Javier: “Autorretrato de verano en Brasil”, *El País Semanal*, 19 de agosto de 2012, 8.

⁹² Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 360-361, citando a GARTON ASH, Timothy: “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians”, *The New York Review of Books*, January 21st, 1995, 36. Véanse también las iluminadoras

Frente a esta posición, otros pensadores creen que la labor crítica de los intelectuales en un sistema democrático debe ejercerse desde dentro de la política y no desde fuera. El escritor checo Václav Havel defendió y practicó firmemente la idea de que política e intelectualidad son dos esferas compatibles y compaginables, entre las que hay fluidez. Como ex-opositores y defensores de unos valores, los intelectuales de Europa Centro-Oriental, cree Havel, tienen la oportunidad de cambiar la forma de hacer política para darle una mayor dimensión moral, en lugar de permitir que la política les cambie a ellos⁹³.

Retomaremos este debate al finalizar, pero de momento diremos que la relación entre la *inteligencia* (o, si se prefiere, los intelectuales) y el poder siempre ha sido variopinta y compleja, no sólo durante períodos dictatoriales y de transición, sino también en democracias “maduras”, cuando algunos *inteligenci* pasan a formar parte de gabinetes de “expertos”⁹⁴ o a ser los asesores de políticos profesionales, ajustándose más al perfil de la tercera categoría descrita más arriba, que a la primera. En cualquier caso, e independientemente de la constatación creciente, en todos los países, del descenso del peso social y político de los intelectuales como categoría, podemos dar por hecho que su actividad en la esfera pública, sea cual sea, es una forma de hacer política⁹⁵.

Dada la importancia de su faceta pública, y en relación con lo anterior, conviene adelantar que la labor de la “*intelligentsia* intelectual”⁹⁶ va indisolublemente unida a lo lingüístico en sus distintas manifestaciones: oral, plástica, performativa y, especialmente en nuestro caso, escrita. En este sentido, para la *intelligentsia* el lenguaje no sólo es comunicación sino, ante todo, una de sus principales formas de acción en la sociedad y, en consecuencia, también un rasgo diferenciador respecto de otros grupos sociales. Así parece percibirlo Jonathan Schell en su introducción a una obra de Adam Michnik, una de las figuras más relevantes del panorama opositor polaco que estudiaremos en esta investigación:

His [Michnik's] writings, like the Federalist papers of Madison and Hamilton, or the articles and letters of Gandhi, are **not only reflections on action but a form of action themselves. With equal justice, one might say that his actions** -together with those of countless others in Poland- **are a kind of writing, for action, when it is creative, has a power to disclose new possibilities which is as great as that of any book. Michnik's writings, then, both mirror and help to shape the new possibilities that have been and are being brought into existence by the Polish people.**⁹⁷

reflexiones sobre poder político e intelectualidad de BOBBIO, Norberto: *La duda y la elección. Intelectuales y poder en la sociedad contemporánea*, Barcelona, Paidós, 1998 (1993).

⁹³ HAVEL, Václav: *The Art of the Impossible: Politics as Morality in Practice. Speeches and Writings, 1990-1996*, New York/ Toronto, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, 82-86, 95-102, 109-114; Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 361-364. Acerca de las similitudes entre los discursos patrióticos críticos de opositores checoslovacos y polacos, véase Kopeček: “Human Rights...”, 584.

⁹⁴ Si bien, en cierto modo, esta función también la desempeñaron a principios de los años 80 en Polonia algunos intelectuales opositores, cuando se ofrecieron para asesorar a los trabajadores de los astilleros en huelga en Gdańsk, momento de la formación de Solidarność.

⁹⁵ JEDLICKI, Jerzy: “What’s the Use of Intellectuals?”, *Polish Sociological Review*, 106, 1994, 104.

⁹⁶ E incluyendo aquí también a los artistas plásticos, correspondientes a la quinta categoría profesional formulada por Domański (ver más adelante).

⁹⁷ SCHELL, Jonathan: “Introduction”, en MICHNIK, Adam: *Letters from Prison and other essays*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1987, XX-XXI, negrita mía. El texto de Schell se publicó originalmente como “Reflection”, *The New Yorker Magazine*, February 3rd, 1986. También BORATYN, Norbert, BRODACKI, Jakub *et al.*: “Czynniki określające dynamikę ruchu ‘Solidarność’ w latach 1980-1981”, en Kula (pod red.): *Solidarność w ruchu...*, 75-76 y SOWIŃSKI, Paweł: “Komunikaty z pola walki”, *Wolność i Solidarność. Studia z dziejów opozycji wobec komunizmu i dyktatury*, 1, 2010, 29-34.

Vuelve a plantearse aquí, nuevamente, una posible complementariedad o antagonismo entre política e intelectualidad en torno al lenguaje: si asumiésemos que la forma escrita permite una reflexión pausada, desarrollos amplios y revisiones, y la oral implica inmediatez, simplificación, mayor brevedad y respuestas más contundentes, sin ambigüedades, parece que la primera encajaría más con “lo intelectual” y la segunda con “lo político”. Por supuesto, no se trata en absoluto de prácticas excluyentes, pues suelen estar bastante entremezcladas en la práctica⁹⁸, como hemos señalado antes; además, muchas de las cualidades que acabamos de asignar aquí a una y otra son, en muchos casos y contextos, intercambiables. Pero también es cierto que la primacía de la transmisión escrita sobre la oral (o viceversa) parece otorgar un matiz distinto a las cavilaciones de una persona. La cuestión es saber, en cada coyuntura, qué grado y tipo de interacción existe entre los distintos elementos presentes en la comunicación: si es el emisor quien, en última instancia, tiene potestad sobre la forma y contenido de su mensaje, independientemente del canal que utilice para difundirlo o de la reacción de sus receptores, o si el canal condiciona más de lo que creemos tanto el contenido como la forma del mensaje, y la manera en que el receptor lo capta.

La quinta categoría propuesta por Henryk Domański, los “creadores de cultura”, incluye a artistas plásticos, músicos, actores y, nuevamente, a escritores. Por ejemplo, Czesław Miłosz es, según esta división, intelectual y “creador de cultura” simultáneamente. Para el polaco medio, éste sería el segmento de la *intelligencja* más reconocible, según las encuestas. No obstante, a nuestro entender, tanto “artistas” como “intelectuales” podrían quedar englobados en una misma categoría, pues el arte es una forma más de discurso público.

Siguiendo esta línea, otros autores, como Mikułowski Pomorski, plantean que la actividad creadora sería uno de los cuatro criterios básicos para diferenciar a la *intelligentsia* de otros grupos⁹⁹. En este sentido, ¿sería un requisito indispensable “crear” algo para ser un *intelligent*? Si considerásemos el verbo “crear” en un sentido amplio, la mayoría de la *intelligentsia* podría calificarse como “creadora”, dado que recurre a sus ideas e ingenio para desempeñar su labor. Una labor que no necesariamente debe tener como fruto una obra de arte, una teoría o una propuesta de índole general, sino también algo mucho más delimitado, con un fin preciso o una aplicación práctica muy concreta, como la creación de un sistema de producción para organizar una empresa, la mejora de un dispositivo, o la preparación de un alegato para defender a un cliente en un juicio.

Por tanto, lo más importante en la *intelligentsia* sería, de acuerdo con Mikułowski Pomorski, su interpretación de la realidad y sus reflexiones, independientemente de su formación y conocimientos académicos, pues el criterio educativo se vuelve difuso y problemático en la práctica, sobre todo cuando existe una sobreabundancia de personas con estudios, como sucede desde la segunda mitad del siglo XX¹⁰⁰.

Biografía de Adam Michnik: BOUYEURE, Cyril: *Adam Michnik. Wymyślić to, co polityczne*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009 [orig. en francés: *L'invention du politique. Une biographie d'Adam michnik*, Lausanne, Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc, 2007].

⁹⁸ John B. Thompson apuntaba en su introducción a los ensayos de Bourdieu: “For the political field is, among other things, the site *par excellence* in which agents seek to form and transform their visions of the world and thereby the world itself: it is the site *par excellence* in which words are actions and the symbolic character of power is at stake”. THOMPSON, John B.: “Editor’s Introduction”, en Bourdieu: *Language and Symbolic...*, 26.

⁹⁹ Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 27

¹⁰⁰ Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 26-27; Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 33-34, y LESZKOWICZ-BACZYŃSKI, Jerzy: “Tożsamość współczesnej inteligencji w warunkach

El sexto y último grupo funcional lo formarían los *inteligenci-społecznicy*. Este segundo término puede traducirse como “activista social”, y abarca a todas aquellas personas que desempeñan una labor desinteresada en favor de otros y sienten que tienen la misión de ayudar a los necesitados y de luchar contra las desigualdades. Esta idea de hecho sería, según Domański, un ingrediente del *etos* de la *inteligencja*, pero la representan sobre todo profesores, médicos y, en ocasiones, científicos. De acuerdo con este autor, dicho *etos* no habría desaparecido en Polonia pese a las transformaciones que ha experimentado la figura del *inteligent-społecznik* con el cambio a una economía de mercado (profesionalización, etc.), pero es una cuestión que sigue siendo objeto de debate y controversia¹⁰¹.

Una vez dicho esto, podríamos apuntar, como primera tentativa de definición, que la *inteligencja* opositora sobre la que he investigado está formada por estudiosos, pensadores y profesores, habitualmente con formación especializada en historia, filología, filosofía o periodismo, o bien involucrados en actividades de edición y difusión de textos. De acuerdo con Maciej Chojnowski y Hanna Palska, desde la primera mitad del siglo XIX existirían en Polonia dos formas de entender la cultura y, en consecuencia, dos tipos de *inteligencja*:

A) En primer lugar, tendríamos a los *inteligenci* creadores, que promueven y desarrollan una cultura “autodidacta” (*samowiedna*) concentrada en problemas ideológicos, y suelen recalcar la idea de auto-conciencia, manejando en exclusiva los discursos sobre la *inteligencja* en su conjunto y reservándose, además, el rol de guías de la nación.

B) En segundo lugar, tendríamos a la *inteligencja* profesional (*zawodowa*) o de “expertos”, que concibe la cultura de una forma más instrumental. Estos otros *inteligenci* suelen caracterizarse por un mayor sentido práctico y por serles más ajenas las reflexiones teóricas o de carácter espiritual.

Pese a que esta división es, como admiten los propios Chojnowski y Palska¹⁰², un tanto artificial, los opositores que estudiaremos encajan mejor en la primera forma de ser y de entender la cultura que en la segunda, si bien también nos encontraremos con personas que, a partir de una educación y trayectoria profesional más acorde con la *inteligencja* de “expertos” o de técnicos, como Zbigniew Bujak, dieron el salto a la categoría “autodidacta”, ya que la publicación de sus reflexiones en ensayos o artículos pasó a formar una parte muy importante de su actividad cotidiana y fue lo que les permitió alcanzar reconocimiento social¹⁰³. Como veremos a lo largo del trabajo, espiritualidad e ideología no estuvieron necesariamente (ni siquiera habitualmente) reñidas con el pragmatismo en el pensamiento de la *inteligencja* opositora polaca de los años 70 y 80.

Otro factor, ya esbozado más arriba, que caracteriza a la *inteligencja* opositora de estos años es el empleo del discurso público como forma de comunicar sus ideas; al reflexionar públicamente sobre cuestiones, primordialmente de tipo ético o de valores, que le preocupan y a la vez interesan (o generan un renovado interés) en amplios sectores de la población, el *inteligent* no sólo es “creador de opinión” y tendencias, sino también autoridad moral, convirtiéndose de hecho en una élite social dentro de la propia

zmiany ustrojowej”, en Mikułowski Pomorski (pod red.): *Inteligencja...*, 127-128; Zuzowski: *Political Dissent...*, 3.

¹⁰¹ SKARGA, Barbara: “Inteligencja zamilkła”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14-I-2006, 10; Jedlicki: “What’s the Use...”, 101-110; JEDLICKI, Jerzy: “Inteligencja w demokratycznym teatrze”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31/XII/2004, 14 y JEDLICKI, Jerzy: “Przedwczesny pogrzeb inteligencji”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28/I/2006, 10; DOMAŃSKI, Henryk: “Zmierzch inteligencji?”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8/I/2005, 22.

¹⁰² Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 25-26.

¹⁰³ Zuzowski: *Political Dissent...*, 261.

inteligencja, tal y como señalaba Domański para el caso de sus “*inteligenci-intelectuales*”. Esto se combina con un impulso prometeico de ayudar al resto de grupos sociales, que en nuestra investigación se materializa habitualmente en el deseo de averiguar y llevar la verdad a los demás. La *inteligencja* ocuparía, al desempeñar estas funciones de servicio, una posición intermedia en la escala social, entre las clases más elevadas y las más bajas¹⁰⁴, y en muchas ocasiones sería el nexo o la intermediaria entre el poder político y el resto de la población, como veremos más adelante. Por tanto, mis sujetos de estudio son, esencialmente, una mezcla de la cuarta, la segunda y la sexta categoría funcional elaboradas por Domański, que pueden conllevar también el rol de “experto” o asesor (tercera categoría) o el salto a la política (primera categoría) desde una posición de contra-élite donde, en buena medida, ya desempeñaba ese rol político extraoficialmente, en el marco de la oposición.

Adam Michnik, en uno de sus muchos ensayos, distinguió tres comportamientos de la *inteligencja*:

... reality is viewed in one way by the active oppositionist, in another by the intellectual who is giving an account of it, and still differently by the moralist who is judging the ‘visible world’. Each of these points of view has its light and dark side. The oppositionist’s view, for example, is inevitably tainted by one-sidedness; this helps him to reshape the world but prevents him from perceiving its many different dimensions. Moralism enables the individual to notice the ethical traps that lie in wait for anyone who takes on active responsibility, but it also favors an exaggerated cult of ‘clean hands’. The spectator’s view more easily encompasses an understanding of the complexity of the human condition but clouds the search for solutions to such questions as ‘What should be done?’ and ‘What is good and what is evil?’.

One’s view of the world depends on whether one wants to change the world, understand it, or pass moral judgment upon it.¹⁰⁵

Acción, observación y juicio moral se combinan en distintas proporciones, de hecho, en la mayoría de los pensadores que estudiaremos, incluido el propio Michnik. La *inteligencja* que nos ocupa la integran personas que ejercían una labor intelectual (o empezaron a ejercerla a partir de su actividad opositora) con una clara escala de valores, que estaban involucradas activamente en la oposición y que, además, fueron testigos y cronistas de acontecimientos socio-políticos y culturales de gran calado en Polonia. En suma, si reunían las tres funciones descritas por Michnik, y aún más si aceptamos el planteamiento de Schell de que la escritura, o cualquier otro lenguaje, puede ser una forma de acción y la acción una forma de escritura, ¿quiere esto decir que su visión del mundo y de la situación polaca era más “completa” y equilibrada, haciéndoles más competentes a la hora de tomar decisiones? La pregunta quedará, por el momento, en el aire, pero aprovechamos para apuntar aquí que equilibrar y combinar será, precisamente, una tónica habitual entre algunos miembros de la *inteligencja* a la hora de evaluar tanto el presente como el legado histórico de Polonia.

Hasta ahora hemos partido de la base de que la *inteligencja* es un grupo social que tiene una existencia real. No obstante, otros especialistas prefieren tratarla primordialmente como una categoría mítica. En este sentido, la *inteligencja* sería, según Jolanta Babiuch-Luxmoore, un elemento intrínseco muy importante de la conciencia histórica y nacional de Polonia, una formación moral-intelectual con orígenes en la *inteligencja* del siglo XIX que los polacos identificarían con la tradición y la mentalidad del país, con un modelo de sensibilidad y con un *etos* social determinados. Es decir, la

¹⁰⁴ BARTOSZEK, Adam: “Habitus polskiej inteligencji w społeczeństwach realnego socjalizmu i rynkowej transformacji”, en Mikułowski Pomorski (pod red.): *Inteligencja...*, 63, basándose en la definición de Joanna Kurczewska en la *Encyklopedia socjologii*.

¹⁰⁵ MICHNIK, Adam: “Maggots and Angels”, en Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 176, negrita mía.

inteligencja también puede ser entendida como un sistema de valores (“lo que hay en nosotros”) y como un patrón de comportamiento o unas normas de actuación (“lo que hay entre nosotros”). Sólo así se explicaría, dice esta autora, la recurrencia y virulencia del debate acerca de la *inteligencja* en el país, que se remonta a la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, y se retoma sobre todo en momentos de cambios políticos difíciles y a menudo dramáticos, como sucede con otros mitos, especialmente cuando la posición o la existencia de la propia *inteligencja* se ve amenazada¹⁰⁶. Las tesis sobre su posible desaparición o la formación de otra de nuevo cuño cubren cientos de páginas en periódicos y revistas desde principios del siglo XX, sobre todo durante años tan críticos y llenos de significado como son los de 1905-1907, 1918, 1926, 1945, 1956 y 1989¹⁰⁷.

De acuerdo con Babiuch-Luxmoore y Jerzy Jedlicki, el mito de la *inteligencja* polaca surgió a la par que el convencimiento de que ésta desempeñaba un rol suprahistórico vinculado a la pervivencia de la tradición nacional, y también al mismo tiempo que nacía y se desarrollaba la moderna conciencia nacional en Europa. La *inteligencja* representó, durante el siglo XIX, un sistema de valores y un *etos* social específicos, entre cuyos componentes destacaba un fuerte sentimiento de responsabilidad hacia la nación. Paradójicamente, cuanto más se desdibujaba su contorno sociológico en la realidad, más se tendía a escribir, debatir y generalizar sobre ella. Sin duda, la división del territorio polaco entre los imperios ruso, austríaco y prusiano desde finales del siglo XVIII fue un factor clave a la hora de situar la problemática de la teoría nacional en el centro del pensamiento nobiliario y revolucionario¹⁰⁸.

Además, en una cultura donde la comunidad y lo colectivo ocupan un lugar especial, como sucede en la polaca (fuertemente influida, entre otros factores, por el catolicismo), la sociedad demanda mitos sobre un grupo que sea receptivo a las cuestiones nacionales y se dedique a servir a los demás, especialmente a los más desfavorecidos¹⁰⁹. En Polonia, los intelectuales-*inteligenci* serían, paradójicamente, tanto el objeto de esta petición colectiva como el sujeto al que va dirigida, especialmente si se ocupan de escribir y reflexionar sobre la historia, con lo que no siempre es fácil determinar dónde acaba uno y empieza otro. Como planteábamos más arriba, cuando los historiadores u otros humanistas participan en los debates públicos sobre el pasado, pueden verse en la tesitura de tener que confrontar su discurso y formación “científicos” con la demanda pública de una historia que sustente una identidad colectiva¹¹⁰. Sólo que, además, en el contexto polaco, el mito nacional que se les solicita versaría en buena parte sobre sí mismos, como abanderados que son (o se les considera) de la *inteligencja*.

Que la mayor parte de las reflexiones sobre la *inteligencja* las hagan los propios *inteligenci* conlleva una limitación de perspectiva, pero también la oportunidad de desarrollar una profunda autocrítica, que surge precisamente del sentimiento de pertenencia a la *inteligencja* y de la responsabilidad que implica, tanto a nivel colectivo como individual, ser su representante en el foro público. La autoconciencia de los *inteligenci* tiene, por tanto, un carácter discursivo y procesual, y se conforma a partir de

¹⁰⁶ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 8-9, 41-42, 151 y 206-207, y Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 26.

¹⁰⁷ Domański: “Wstęp”, 9 y Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 26.

¹⁰⁸ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 21, 36-38; JEDLICKI, Jerzy: “Wiek dziewiętnasty: inteligencja w pojęciu polskim”, en GARLICKA, Aleksandra y JEDLICKI, Jerzy (reds.): *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX wieku. Materiały z wystawy i sesji naukowej*, Warszawa, Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej “Zachęta”, Polski Towarzystwo Historyczne, 1997, 141.

¹⁰⁹ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 38 y 41.

¹¹⁰ Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 453.

las (meta)narrativas y los términos que ellos mismos elaboran¹¹¹. Las palabras y los conceptos son su “arma” y, a la vez, su “alma”, pues a través de ellos perciben y definen la realidad y, por extensión, a sí mismos¹¹².

La cuestión, en nuestro caso, es saber cómo percibían o definían su labor los propios intelectuales opositores polacos para determinar si realmente se les planteó esta disyuntiva en algún momento y, de ser así, conocer cómo la resolvieron. ¿Creían, en la misma línea que sus contemporáneos Witold Kula y Jerzy Topolski, que su misión consistía esencialmente en “desmitificar”? Si, como apunta Ifversen, los mitos justifican un determinado orden y autoridad en una comunidad¹¹³, y la *inteligencja* forma parte de esos mitos, ¿no se exponía ésta, precisamente, a la pérdida de su autoridad moral sobre la sociedad polaca si renunciaba a los mitos en sus discursos históricos? ¿No estaría también, en cierto modo, “aniquilando” su identidad colectiva?

Frente al antagonismo tajante entre historia y mito, cabe otra posibilidad: que la *inteligencja*, conscientemente o no, estuviera desenvolviéndose en un terreno exclusivamente mítico. Es decir, que los *inteligenci*, en su faceta tradicional de “creadores de modelos” y propuestas alternativas¹¹⁴, se estuvieran dedicando a revisar los mitos que conforman la tradición histórica polaca para decidir cuáles eran “positivos” y merecía la pena preservar, y cuáles habían sido perjudiciales internacional y socialmente para Polonia y, por tanto, debían descartarse de ahí en adelante¹¹⁵. Esto les permitiría, claro está, salvaguardar su propio mito, o bien someterlo a una revisión y redefinición en caso de que lo considerasen necesario¹¹⁶.

Como la autodefinición es una cuestión de contrastes que lleva implícita la definición de aquello contra lo que se lucha, también debemos tener en cuenta en este punto qué opinión tenía la *inteligencja* opositora sobre la política histórica y educativa del régimen de la PRL: si la consideraba un intento de destruir los mitos clásicos de la cultura polaca a través del materialismo histórico y el cientifismo (para suplantarlos, en todo caso, por otros que carecían de arraigo en la tradición nacional), o bien las veía como un intento de mitificación de nuevo cuño a través de la posterior doctrina del “nacional-comunismo”¹¹⁷.

Otra cuestión recurrente en los foros académicos de humanistas y científicos sociales consiste en determinar la diferencia entre “intelectualidad” e *intelligentsia*.

El caso más conocido y estudiado en Europa occidental es el del “intellectual” francés, directamente relacionado con el *affaire Dreyfus* (1894-1906) y con los escritores que salieron en defensa pública de este militar de origen judío acusado de espionaje, especialmente Émile Zola, que en 1898 publicó su famoso artículo “J’accuse” al respecto¹¹⁸.

¹¹¹ Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 26-27 y 29.

¹¹² SDVIZHKOV, Denis: “The Intelligentsia: From a Global Phenomenon to a Peripheral One, And Vice Versa”, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 103, 2011, 91-92; Bourdieu: *Language and Symbolic...*, esp. “Authorized language: The Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse”, 107-116.

¹¹³ Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 454.

¹¹⁴ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 207.

¹¹⁵ En la línea de lo que apunta Bo Stráth: “history, as a permanent process of reconsidering the past, means that demystification is remystification”. Stráth: “Introduction...”, 19, nota al pie 1.

¹¹⁶ Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 300 y ss.

¹¹⁷ KUBIK, Jan: *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*, University Park, Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994, 2-3 y 31-74; ZAREMBA, Marcin: *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Trio/ Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2001.

¹¹⁸ BENDA, Julien: *La Trahison des Clercs*, Grasset, 1927; ARON, Raymond: *L’Opium des intellectuels*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1956; SARTRE, Jean Paul: *Los intelectuales y la Revolución: después de Mayo del*

Según muchos estudiosos, los intelectuales y los *inteligenci* habrían aparecido en regiones del mundo con trayectorias históricas distintas: mientras que la intelectualidad sería propia de los países occidentales, la *intelligentsia* se habría originado en los países de Europa Oriental, lo cual explicaría sus diferencias. De acuerdo con esta línea, los intelectuales son el resultado de la fusión de la élite educada de Occidente con su clase media (educación + propiedad); en el Este, en cambio, esa unión no llegó a producirse debido a la debilidad y poco atractivo de su burguesía. En tierras polacas, concretamente, en lugar de existir una clase media autónoma, se contaba con un estamento noble bastante amplio que se había ido empobreciendo de generación en generación debido a la ausencia de una ley de mayorazgo que evitase la fragmentación y el reparto de las propiedades entre todos los herederos. Por tanto, tampoco existía la figura del “segundón” que, en otros países, había tenido que buscar su sustento engrosando las filas del clero o del funcionariado estatal. Con la pérdida, además, de su independencia como Estado en 1795, el acceso de polacos educados a los cuadros gubernamentales se vio seriamente limitado por motivos políticos e ideológicos, y el atraso socio-económico de la zona se acentuó. La nobleza polaca, una vez perdido su liderazgo político y económico por la destrucción del orden tradicional, buscó nuevas formas de aceptación social basadas en la educación, la cultura y el sentimiento de responsabilidad patriótica. Esto causó que un nuevo elemento estructural de la sociedad, la *inteligencja* polaca, se desarrollara más allá del sistema funcional de un Estado opresor (a cargo de imperios extranjeros hasta 1918) y se convirtiera en antagonista de éste de forma abierta o latente. En este contexto, la *inteligencja* desarrolló su idea de misión, de servicio permanente y de sacrificio, y se encargó de desempeñar las tareas de carácter nacional que los Estados particionistas no estaban dispuestos a hacer. En otras palabras, aquellos cometidos que en Occidente realizaban un aparato estatal moderno, instituciones territoriales y profesionales, empresas, etc., fueron asumidos en Polonia por la *inteligencja*, al menos en la teoría¹¹⁹.

No obstante, otros autores, como Denis Sdvizhkov, rechazan estas tesis y afirman que la *intelligentsia* es más un fenómeno “global” que propio de la “periferia” europea, con sus circunstancias específicas de atraso, regímenes autoritarios o absolutistas, etc., caso de Polonia o Rusia. Según este investigador, el concepto de *intelligentsia* surgió cuando la idea de un “tercer estado” uniforme, característica del siglo XVIII, fue desafiada en el siglo XIX. Se produjeron entonces numerosos debates en toda Europa, primero entre los publicistas y en 1848 en los parlamentos, acerca de si únicamente daba derecho a la representación política y al poder la combinación de educación (*Bildung*) y propiedad (*Besitz*), o si el factor educativo podía actuar de forma autónoma.

La *intelligentsia*, de acuerdo con esta postura, habría mantenido tanto en Oriente como en Occidente una relación conflictiva no sólo con la burguesía, sino también con el Estado, al que habría tratado de esquivar y empujar fuera de la política a través del

1968, Buenos Aires, Rodolfo Alonso, 1973; MIQUEL, Pierre: *L'affaire Dreyfus*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1973; ORY, Pascal y SIRINELLI, Jean-François: *Les Intellectuels en France de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1986; CHARLE, Christophe: *Naissance des « intellectuels » (1880-1900)*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1990, y *Les Intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle: essai d'histoire comparée*, Paris, Seuil, 1996; SAID, Edward W.: *Des intellectuels et du Pouvoir*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1994.

¹¹⁹ Jedlicki: “Wiek dziewiętnasty...”, 141-142; Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 10-14; Żarnowski: “Inteligencja w Polsce...”, 81; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 40-41, citando a GELLA, Aleksander: “An Introduction to the Sociology of the Intelligentsia”, en GELLA, Alexander (ed.): *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals. Theory, Method and Case Study*, Beverly Hills (Calif.), Sage Publications, 1976, 24-25; HOLZER, Jerzy: *Solidarność 1980-1981. Geneza i historia*, Warszawa, Agencja Omnipress, 1990 (1984), 50-51.

concepto de nación y apelando a distintas fuerzas, como la comunidad, la religión, el proletariado o la bohemia. Igualmente, la contradicción entre el progresismo liberal de la *intelligentsia* y su radicalismo revolucionario también se produjo en diversos países europeos, no sólo en territorio ruso o en los choques entre las corrientes insurreccionista y positivista polacas¹²⁰. No obstante, a lo largo del siglo XX los términos fueron transformándose, y fue en ese momento cuando la palabra “intelectualidad” se asignó al Oeste y la *intelligentsia* se reservó exclusivamente para el Este, lo que se vio reforzado por el posterior empleo de esta última por parte de los regímenes comunistas¹²¹.

Independientemente de si la división entre *intelligentsia* e intelectualidad tiene raíces geográficas e históricas, o, como apuntan otros, podemos hallar tanto intelectuales como *inteligenci* conviviendo en una misma sociedad, lo cierto es que, al margen de compartir determinadas características externas, como su nivel educativo o su profesión, a unos y a otros se les atribuyen rasgos y comportamientos distintos. Por una parte, a la *intelligentsia* le guía su sentido del deber social y moral hacia la nación y, aunque sus miembros tengan ideologías muy dispares, todos dan prioridad a lo inmaterial y lo espiritual, y también a lo colectivo, frente a la prosperidad o el progreso materiales, además de albergar pretensiones de liderazgo nacional¹²².

Por otra parte, los intelectuales valoran sobre todo la individualidad y la autonomía, y muestran, desde un punto de vista sociológico, una mayor profesionalidad, creatividad y competitividad, pero menor fidelidad hacia unas determinadas ideas y también menor compromiso con la sociedad. Es decir, si para un *intelligent* lo más importante son las consecuencias sociales que tiene su trabajo, más que la realización de éste en sí, para un intelectual la meta es cumplir con su tarea de la mejor forma posible, sin tener en cuenta para quién trabaja o lo que eso puede generar después. Se produce entonces, según Mikułowski Pomorski, una suerte de división de tareas, de forma que la *intelligentsia* se encarga de defender las virtudes humanísticas y ciudadanas mientras que los intelectuales tienden más a la búsqueda de la verdad¹²³.

Sin embargo, en nuestra opinión, es posible que la realidad europea desde el mismo siglo XIX, y más aún en la actualidad, rebase este tipo de compartimentaciones. Por ejemplo, lo que en muchas ocasiones se llamó “intelectual” en Europa Occidental, desde Émile Zola y su “J’accuse” hasta aquellos escritores y pensadores que se comprometieron con la causa de la oposición polaca en los años 70 y 80 del siglo XX, tiene más que ver con el perfil de la *intelligentsia* descrito más arriba que con el de intelectualidad, pues se trataba de personas que defendían el bien común y los valores cívicos, denunciaban las injusticias y atropellos cometidos dentro y fuera de su país, criticaban las políticas o la pasividad de sus estados y trataban de movilizar a la sociedad. De hecho, como se ha visto antes, otros autores polacos plantean la terminología a la inversa: *inteligencja* como colectivo numéricamente muy amplio y en su mayoría más centrado en su profesión que en la participación en la esfera pública y, dentro de ésta, los *intelectuales*, un grupo reducido que trasciende los márgenes de su especialidad y desea influir en la vida pública (moral, tendencias culturales, actitudes sociales, elecciones políticas) a través de su opinión libremente expresada, y no en calidad de expertos a los que se les pide consejo. Es decir, personas, sabias o necias, que

¹²⁰ Sdvizhkov: “The Intelligentsia...”, 90-91.

¹²¹ Sdvizhkov: “The Intelligentsia...”, 97-99.

¹²² Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 11, nota al pie 4, y 39-40, citando a Gella: “An Introduction...”, en Gella (ed.): *The Intelligentsia...*; Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 21-22.

¹²³ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 38-41; Mikułowski Pomorski: “Wprowadzenie...”, 20-25; Lepenies: *¿Qué es un intelectual...?*, 36-37.

se inmiscuyen (por lo menos “de vez en cuando”) en asuntos ajenos, defienden determinados valores y poseen cierta autoridad o prestigio moral¹²⁴.

Probablemente la diferencia más notable y crucial entre el pensamiento de la *intelligentsia* occidental y el de la *intelligentsia* europeo-oriental —debido, ahora sí, a la trayectoria divergente de sus respectivas regiones— es el factor nacional, que era (aún es) determinante en la segunda, pero se encuentra muy difuminado o ausente en la primera, que suele tomar otros colectivos más amplios (ej. las sociedades democráticas capitalistas), más reducidos (una región, una ciudad), o diferentes (sociedad, ciudadanía) como interlocutores en sus discursos.

Si vinculamos todo esto con la relación entre política e *intelligentsia*-intelectualidad, parece más plausible que sean aquellos intelectuales que dan prioridad a los valores e intereses colectivos, frente a su propia individualidad y autonomía, los que respalden o se pongan al servicio de un poder político que, al menos en apariencia, encarne esos mismos valores y busque el bien común. De hecho, así explican y justifican muchos *inteligenci* opositores en Polonia su inicial fascinación y apoyo a la ideología y estado comunistas, de los que se desengañaron y separaron posteriormente al comprobar, según ellos, que la teoría no se correspondía con lo que finalmente ponían en práctica los gobiernos soviético y de la PRL.

Señala Barbara Falk que, en cierto sentido, es posible interpretar la creciente disidencia de los intelectuales polacos posterior a 1968 como un intento de “revertir” o “enmendar” su “desviación” previa a través del desarrollo de un compromiso social, basado en la independencia de pensamiento y de acción, el respeto de los derechos individuales y la reintroducción de la moralidad en la política. No obstante, a continuación la autora destaca que, irónicamente, estos *inteligenci* volvieron a cometer el mismo “error” por el que fueron criticados, sólo que al servicio de otras ideas y prácticas políticas (pluralismo, democracia...) ¹²⁵. En definitiva, todo parece apuntar que en este tipo de contextos la noción de *intelligent* no sólo es difícilmente separable de la política, entendida en un sentido teórico, sino también de un concepto igualmente amplio pero mucho más práctico, el “ejercicio del poder” (o el compromiso político-cívico activo), con todos los obstáculos y contradicciones que median entre una y otro, y los consiguientes dilemas morales que suscitan éstos últimos.

Por último, y en relación con lo dicho anteriormente acerca de la falta de correspondencia entre dichos y hechos en los regímenes comunistas, también resulta difícil concebir que la *intelligentsia* no persiguiese de alguna forma la verdad (teniendo en cuenta, eso sí, lo dicho previamente sobre el discurso mítico), pues ésta se integra, como avanzábamos antes, en su *corpus* de valores y forma parte habitual de sus reflexiones, más aún al vivir bajo un sistema dictatorial donde se manipula la información y los relatos sobre el pasado, como en el caso que nos ocupa.

Dicho esto, ¿quiénes encajarían, entonces, en la definición anterior de “intelectual”? Posiblemente un amplio sector de las clases medias con formación especializada y cargos de “expertos” en distintos ámbitos; sin embargo, el grado de compromiso con la comunidad y la escala de valores puede variar considerablemente de una persona a otra, aunque tengan un nivel socio-económico y profesional muy semejante. Esta cuestión, por supuesto supera con creces nuestro ámbito de trabajo y exige análisis mucho más pormenorizados de los que seríamos capaces de proporcionar en estas páginas. No obstante, creemos que, a la luz de todo lo dicho hasta aquí, ser un

¹²⁴ Domański: “Wstęp”, 13; Jedlicki: “What’s the Use...”, 101-110 y Jedlicki: “Przedwczesny pogrzeb...”. La expresión “inmiscuirse en lo que no les concierne” es de SARTRE, Jean-Paul: *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972 (1965).

¹²⁵ Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, XXVII-XXIX.

intelligent comprende, ante todo, una determinada actitud ante los demás y hacia uno mismo, que va, eso sí, indisolublemente unida, en el caso de Europa Oriental, a un componente nacional que ha sido clave en el pensamiento y la cultura de países como Rusia y Polonia durante la Edad Contemporánea, tal y como apuntaremos brevemente a continuación.

De acuerdo con Denis Sdvizhkov, la primera mitad del siglo XIX es una prolongación de la “era de la racionalidad” (siglo XVIII) y, simultáneamente, la “era de la nacionalidad” impulsada por el movimiento romántico, con lo cual la *intelligentsia* es percibida, por un lado, como racional y progresista, y por otro como representante de la nación. De esta forma, la conciencia histórica nacional recién adquirida involucrará y se asociará, desde el principio, a los *intelligenci*¹²⁶:

«We» is no longer capitalised and related to the person of the monarch, the statement ‘we also have intelligence’ is equated to ‘we belong to the world history’. This is the social interpretation of *cogito ergo sum* —the nation is only possible as an ‘intelligent’ nation. And the reverse —a true intelligentsia may only be a national one.¹²⁷

Posteriormente, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, impera en Europa la visión de la comunidad como actor principal. Esta comunidad es un nuevo “organismo autoconsciente” que necesita y encuentra su “sensor/ termómetro social” (*social sensorium*) en la *intelligentsia*, el “órgano pensante de la nación”, que pasa a ser el “tesoro” y el objeto de *sacrum* de la comunidad. La *intelligentsia* se convierte también entonces en representante de la “nación cultural”, opuesta, en muchos casos, al Estado, con lo que el anterior “we also have intelligence” se transforma en “only we have intelligence”¹²⁸.

En este sentido, las trayectorias de la *intelligentsia* rusa¹²⁹ y la *inteligencja* polaca han discurrido casi en paralelo, si bien con ciertas diferencias relacionadas con su desigual situación política e internacional: Rusia atraviesa esta fase como una gran potencia en expansión, Polonia como un Estado desmembrado; los rusos se enfrentan a las tendencias extranjerizantes, arbitrariedades y políticas represivas de su propio Estado; los polacos, en cambio, hacen frente a tres gobiernos extranjeros.

En la síntesis que hace Orlando Figes sobre la cultura rusa podemos ver reflejadas, de hecho, muchas de las características que también definieron a los *intelligenci* polacos, y que ya han sido mencionadas a lo largo de esta disertación:

Durante los últimos doscientos años las artes rusas han sido el escenario de los debates políticos, filosóficos y religiosos precisamente por la ausencia de un parlamento o de una prensa libre. Como escribió Tolstoi en “Unas pocas palabras sobre *Guerra y paz*” (1868), **las grandes obras en prosa de la tradición rusa no son novelas en el sentido europeo.** Son enormes estructuras poéticas que deben considerarse de manera **simbólica**, no muy diferentes de

¹²⁶ Por supuesto, en el siglo XIX los integrantes de la *inteligencja* en la Polonia dividida no sólo eran étnicamente polacos: había también, por ejemplo, personas de origen judío o alemán. No obstante, si concebimos, como hace Babiuch-Luxmoore, a la *inteligencja* como un mito, debe tenerse en cuenta que éstos poseen una lógica interna propia, en la que las incoherencias o desacuerdos con los hechos históricos (que, en este caso, contradicen la idea de servicio a la nación por motivos patrióticos como rasgo fundamental de la *inteligencja*) dejan de ser importantes y se omiten del relato. Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 25.

¹²⁷ Sdvizhkov: “The Intelligentsia...”, 94; ver también Micińska: “Dzieje inteligencji...”, 46.

¹²⁸ Sdvizhkov: “The Intelligentsia...”, 95; también Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 21, citando a Jedlicki: “Wiek dziewiętnasty...”, 141.

¹²⁹ Obras de Billington: *El icono...*, FIGES, Orlando: *El baile de Natacha. Una historia cultural rusa*, Barcelona, Edhasa, 2010 (2006) y CHURCHWARD, L. G.: *La intelligentsia soviética. Ensayo sobre la estructura social y el papel de los intelectuales soviéticos en los años sesenta*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1976.

los iconos, auténticos laboratorios en los que experimentar con las ideas. Y, al igual que una ciencia o una religión, fueron impulsadas por la búsqueda de la verdad. **El tema común a todas esas obras es Rusia: su personalidad, su historia, sus costumbres y tradiciones, su esencia espiritual y su destino.** De una manera extraordinaria, tal vez exclusiva, la energía artística del país estaba dedicada casi por entero al **intento de aprehender el concepto de su nacionalidad.** En ningún otro lugar del mundo el artista ha sufrido tanto la **carga del liderazgo moral y de ser profeta nacional,** ni tampoco ha sido más **temido y perseguido por el Estado.** Aislados de la **Rusia oficial por los políticos y de la Rusia campesina por su educación,** los artistas rusos se dedicaron a **crear una comunidad nacional de valores e ideas a través de la literatura y del arte.** ¿Qué significaba ser ruso? ¿Cuál era el lugar y la misión de Rusia en el mundo? ¿Y dónde se encontraba la verdadera Rusia? ¿En Europa o en Asia? ¿En San Petersburgo o en Moscú? ¿En el imperio del zar o en la aldea embarrada y de una sola calle donde vivía el “tío” de Natacha [en *Guerra y paz*]? Ésas eran las “preguntas malditas” que ocuparon la mente de todos los escritores, críticos literarios, historiadores, pintores, compositores, teólogos y filósofos de verdad de la edad dorada de la cultura rusa, desde Pushkin hasta Pasternak.¹³⁰

De todas las “preguntas malditas” que atormentaban a los *intelligenci* rusos, las que más nos interesan en esta investigación, y están estrechamente emparentadas con el pensamiento polaco contemporáneo, son las relacionadas con el sentido de la historia, que pasamos a desgranar ahora.

En el último cuarto del siglo XVIII se inicia el proceso de formación de la *intelligentsia* rusa, que se extiende a lo largo del siglo XIX hasta la década de 1860, cuando se manifiesta como grupo social autoconsciente con la creación de la doctrina populista¹³¹. Aproximadamente hacia la mitad de ese proceso, la vivencia en primera persona de la Gran Guerra Patriótica contra Napoleón (1812) alteró la visión del mundo de toda una generación de combatientes de origen noble, lo que les alejó de la forma de vida de sus padres y les hizo adquirir una nueva conciencia histórica que marcó el final del reformismo aristocrático¹³². En este sentido, un miembro del movimiento decembrista manifestaba: “Habíamos participado en los acontecimientos más importantes de la historia, y era insoportable regresar a la existencia hueca de San Petersburgo, a escuchar las charlas sin sentido de los viejos sobre las denominadas virtudes del pasado. Habíamos avanzado cien años”¹³³. Luchando mano a mano con sus siervos campesinos (los *mujik*), había florecido en estos jóvenes un sentimiento de pertenencia a una nueva comunidad de virtud patriótica y fraternidad, la nación, donde nobleza y campesinado debían vivir en armonía. De este modo, en lugar de regresar a esa “existencia hueca”, algunos excombatientes comenzaron a dedicarse profesionalmente, pese al rechazo de sus familias, a distintas actividades artísticas, que concebían como una forma de servicio a la nación en contraste con el servicio al Estado característico de la nobleza rusa¹³⁴.

Durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX, la filosofía, la historia y la crítica literaria sustituyeron a la política y a la religión a la hora de responder a las “preguntas malditas” acerca del sentido de la historia, de la cultura y de la vida misma. Gracias a la influencia de la filosofía alemana, especialmente de las obras de Schelling, los pensadores rusos volvieron a creer en la existencia de un ideal y en que tanto la vida como la historia tenían un propósito, lo que, aparte de proporcionar cierta seguridad y consuelo, fomentó posturas sociopolíticas conservadoras y, paradójicamente, también fue el punto de

¹³⁰ Figes: *El baile...*, 27-28, negrita mía; también 91-147 y Billington: *El icono...*, 315, 349-377 y 501-502.

¹³¹ Billington: *El icono...*, 312-509 y 549-553.

¹³² Figes: *El baile...*, 121; Billington: *El icono...*, 390.

¹³³ Figes: *El baile...*, 121, citando obra *Zapiski, stat'i, pis'ma dekabrista I. D. Iakushkina*, Moscú, 1951: 9.

¹³⁴ Figes: *El baile...*, 123 y 126.

partida del pensamiento revolucionario ruso¹³⁵. Por otro lado, en el campo de la filosofía de la historia las tesis de Herder tuvieron un impacto notable, especialmente las ideas de que la verdad se encontraba dentro de la historia y de que cada cultura se desarrollaba y alcanzaba su esplendor en el mundo de una forma distinta¹³⁶.

Herder creía, además, que Rusia iba a jugar un papel excepcional en la siguiente etapa histórica, lo que, combinado con el pensamiento schellingiano ruso y la influencia de distintos credos cristianos, dio paso a la convicción de que Rusia debía redimir espiritualmente a una civilización europea occidental decadente y materialista. De esta forma, el sufrimiento y la humillación que Occidente le había infligido a Rusia a principios de la Edad Contemporánea fue entendido como un proceso purificador que garantizaba al país un papel redentor y sanador de las heridas espirituales europeas¹³⁷.

No obstante, estas ideas mesiánicas calaron aún más hondo en los movimientos nacionalistas de los territorios anexionados por el Imperio ruso, con poetas como los polacos Adam Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasiński y Juliusz Słowacki, o la Hermandad ucraniana de los Santos Cirilo y Metodio¹³⁸. De hecho, el catolicismo fue un elemento clave en la protección de la identidad nacional polaca y dentro de su corriente nacionalista durante el siglo XIX. La creencia en una misión histórica de salvación y redención donde Polonia es (en palabras de Mickiewicz) “el Cristo de las naciones”, constituye, según Ewa Domańska, uno de los discursos míticos provenientes del Romanticismo más importantes y duraderos de la tradición cultural polaca, junto con el de la insurrección. El mesianismo polaco viene determinado por otros tres componentes míticos: la creencia en la especificidad de Polonia como nación y la creencia de que Polonia era el “bastión de la cristiandad”, ambas con raíces en el período barroco (siglos XVI-XVII), y, por último, la localización geográfica del país, de carácter más reciente (situación entre dos grandes potencias: Rusia/Unión Soviética y Prusia/ Alemania). Asimismo, los dos mitos polacos clásicos sobre Occidente son muy semejantes o equiparables a los de la tradición rusa: por un lado, la idea de que Occidente está en deuda con Polonia, que acarrea la expectativa de su ayuda en el futuro; por otro, la convicción de que Occidente sufre una crisis de valores debido a su materialismo¹³⁹.

Volviendo de nuevo a Rusia, dentro de la controversia entre las corrientes eslavófila y occidentalista, que tienen su origen en el idealismo romántico, surgen tendencias que desarrollan o completan los primeros sentimientos patrióticos nacionales de 1812, como la idealización de la comunidad campesina y del “espíritu del pueblo” (*narodnost*), que se conciben como la fuerza vital regeneradora de la historia (también entre los revolucionarios polacos de entonces), o la idea, inspirada en Saint-Simon, de que la “edad de oro” rusa no pertenece a un pasado remoto, sino que aún está por venir, cuando Rusia asuma el liderazgo del resurgimiento de la civilización europea¹⁴⁰. La convicción de que se tenía una importante misión que cumplir generó entre los artistas y escritores rusos (al igual que entre los polacos, como ya hemos recalcado anteriormente) un fuerte sentido de responsabilidad hacia la colectividad, en este caso hacia la nación, que encontramos, por ejemplo, en Nikolái Gogol y Alexander Ivanov¹⁴¹.

A partir de la década de 1838-1848, además, el pensamiento hegeliano tuvo una influencia crucial en el Imperio ruso, pues ofreció una filosofía de la historia racional y

¹³⁵ Billington: *El icono...*, 446-454.

¹³⁶ Billington: *El icono...*, 454.

¹³⁷ Billington: *El icono...*, 454-458.

¹³⁸ Billington: *El icono...*, 458.

¹³⁹ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 255-256 y 260.

¹⁴⁰ Billington: *El icono...*, 461-466.

¹⁴¹ Billington: *El icono...*, 482-483.

global que reforzaba, una vez más, la idea de que la historia tenía un sentido, y que llevó por vez primera a los occidentalistas (Stankevich, Belinski, Bakunin, Herzen...) a plantearse la revolución como una opción seria, dado que se interpretó que la dialéctica de la historia rusa exigía (justo al contrario que en Alemania) la destrucción total del Estado. Hegel puso las bases para que los pensadores rusos se apoyasen más en una filosofía profética de la historia que en la elaboración de un programa de reformas práctico para su país, urgiéndoles a la acción “en nombre de la necesidad histórica y no de imperativos morales”¹⁴². En los movimientos revolucionarios polacos también podemos apreciar ese gusto por la profecía histórica y la acción armada, sólo que, en este caso, los levantamientos se realizaban en nombre de principios tales como la libertad y la independencia, y después de 1863 las corrientes reformistas empezaron a tener más peso y plantaron cara al idealismo romántico.

Con todos estos ingredientes, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX se produjo un giro de lo filosófico a lo social en el pensamiento ruso. Basándose en las ideas de Comte sobre el progreso histórico¹⁴³, los artistas vislumbraron un ideal al que servir: el advenimiento de una nueva edad de oro sin siervos ni burocracia, ni propiedad privada o autoridad central represiva. Estos pensamientos fueron encarnados a partir de la década de 1860 por la doctrina del populismo (*narodnichestvo*) que, a grandes rasgos, fue la versión autóctona del socialismo utópico moralista y un producto cultural de síntesis entre las corrientes eslavófila y occidentalizante previas. Desde ese momento, la *intelligentsia* recibió oficialmente su nombre y comenzó a considerársela como la fuerza motriz de la historia; una historia que se contemplaba, por influencia del positivismo y del pensamiento de Proudhon, con una gran fe y optimismo. Los populistas combinaban la protesta y la lucha por las mejoras sociales con la conciencia de ser herederos del pensamiento social ruso, es decir, continuadores de las tradiciones críticas. Se produjo también entonces un importante conflicto no resuelto entre dos posturas en el seno de la *intelligentsia*: entre aquella que veía las cosas como realmente eran, en toda su crudeza, y aquella otra que deseaba fervientemente mejorarlas, aunque se consideraba que ambas eran dos aspectos de una Verdad única¹⁴⁴.

Aparte del populismo evolucionista, otros movimientos surgidos a partir de la Revolución iconoclasta rusa, tan dispares como el imperialismo paneslavista reaccionario y el jacobinismo revolucionario, también sostenían que estaban a punto de suceder cambios dramáticos en la historia humana y apoyaban la búsqueda de la verdad absoluta, con lo que parecía más fácil, a juicio de Billington, pasar entonces de una ideología extrema a otra que conformarse con un enfoque liberal más mundano que sólo buscara el placer o verdades a medias¹⁴⁵.

Con motivo de todo lo dicho anteriormente, la propia historiografía experimentó también, cómo no, un *boom* durante el siglo XIX, convirtiéndose en uno de los campos de batalla predilectos entre corrientes que tenían visiones opuestas de Rusia y su destino. Aparecieron numerosas obras, cátedras universitarias y sociedades para el estudio dedicadas a buscar en el pasado lejano los rasgos o puntos fuertes de Rusia que les habían llevado a la victoria de 1812. La *Historia del Estado ruso* (1816-1826) de Nikolái Karamzin, dividida en doce volúmenes, fue la primera historia escrita por un ruso que representaba el pasado de Rusia como una narrativa nacional. En ella, el autor proporciona una visión estatista y monárquica de la historia del Imperio, combinando el academicismo con técnicas narrativas propias de la novela y acentuando las

¹⁴² Billington: *El icono...*, 467-473.

¹⁴³ Billington: *El icono...*, 466.

¹⁴⁴ Billington: *El icono...*, 549-556, 567; Figs: *El baile...*, 288-289, 329.

¹⁴⁵ Billington: *El icono...*, 564.

motivaciones psicológicas de los protagonistas históricos (Boris Godunov, Iván el Terrible...), lo que inspiró numerosas obras artísticas de todo género, como las óperas históricas de Rimsky-Korsakov o Mussorgsky. En cambio, los decembristas, con su tendencia democratizadora y sus contactos con los revolucionarios polacos, hacían hincapié en el espíritu rebelde y amante de la libertad del pueblo ruso e idealizaban no sólo las repúblicas medievales de Pskov y Nóvgorod (con su *veche* o asamblea) o las revueltas cosacas de los siglos XVII-XVIII, sino también la tradición parlamentaria (*sejm*) de la antigua unión polaco-lituana en la República de las Dos Naciones, cuando Polonia aún conservaba su independencia como Estado. También tuvo mucha importancia en su pensamiento histórico una obra del lituano Timoteo Bok, que contribuyó a difundir la idea romántica de la existencia de un gobierno popular en Europa Oriental previo al *Drang nach Osten* alemán a finales de la Edad Media¹⁴⁶.

El interés por la historia y la preocupación por el verdadero destino de Rusia se acentuaron aún más después de la derrota de los decembristas en 1825, pues a partir de entonces pareció claro que el Imperio no tomaría el camino que habían seguido los países occidentales hacia un Estado constitucional moderno. Los debates sobre los orígenes históricos de Rusia también fueron habituales, sobre todo entre los populistas, que defendían una mezcla de costumbres reales de la antigua Rusia y de pasado parcialmente idealizado e imaginado, y sentían fascinación por los viejos creyentes y el período histórico que se extiende entre la Era de las Turbulencias y el reinado de Pedro el Grande¹⁴⁷.

Por otro lado, en el caso polaco, la *inteligencja* decimonónica concibió la democracia republicana sármata como el modelo histórico de sus ideales, pues, a sus ojos, potenciaba lo colectivo (en contraste con la democracia liberal, que resaltaría la independencia y autosuficiencia del individuo), el compromiso, la co-participación y la solidaridad grupal, el servicio al bien común..., en una palabra, todo aquello que los *inteligenci* querían representar en su sociedad. Más aún teniendo en cuenta que, debido a sus orígenes nobiliarios, se consideraban descendientes directos de la nobleza sármata, y por tanto legítimos herederos y continuadores de su *etos*¹⁴⁸.

Dejando atrás el siglo XIX, y sobre todo desde que Polonia recuperó su independencia en 1918, los debates y controversias acerca de la posible desaparición de la *inteligencja* o la transformación de sus cometidos cada vez fueron más frecuentes. El empeño por perfilarla y aprehenderla podía manifestar tanto el deseo de continuidad de la tradición que ésta representaba (presentando la identidad social de los autores que escribían sobre ella) como la necesidad de ruptura, reinterpretación o modificación de su contenido (cometido ideológico), además, claro está, de un intento de descripción “objetiva” del fenómeno (cometido cognoscitivo)¹⁴⁹. Fue en este contexto de replanteamiento socio-cultural, especialmente desde el período de entreguerras, donde la futura *inteligencja* opositora de los años 70 y 80 vivió y se desarrolló.

De acuerdo con Jolanta Babiuch-Luxmoore, a lo largo de todo el período de la República Popular de Polonia (1948-1989) los debates en torno al mito de la *inteligencja* pivotaron sobre dos ejes:

El primero de ellos, más propio del pensamiento oficial del régimen, consistía en desmitificar a la *inteligencja* argumentando, en primer lugar, que el mito del siglo XIX no se correspondía con la realidad actual, pues la *inteligencja* moderna no aspiraba a ser una élite intelectual y moral, sino que era técnica y debía construir las bases materiales

¹⁴⁶ Fíges: *El baile...*, 183-184, 187-190; Billington: *El icono...*, 385-386, 388-389.

¹⁴⁷ Billington: *El icono...*, 565; Fíges: *El baile...*, 184, 187-188.

¹⁴⁸ Chojnowski y Palska: “O wielopostaciowość...”, 21-22.

¹⁴⁹ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 131-132, 145-146.

del nuevo Estado tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial (M. Miskowiec, Stanisław Kwiatkowski, Józef Czyrek); o bien, en segundo lugar, que, directamente, ese mito siempre había sido falso. En este caso, se proyectaba una imagen negativa de la *inteligencja* decimonónica: se le reprochaba su aislamiento, su sentimiento de superioridad, su falta de realismo político, su tendencia al conservadurismo o a la anarquía, su servilismo, su admiración por Occidente, su falta de compromiso para resolver problemas sociales concretos, sus gustos pequeño-burgueses, etc. Mantuvo esta postura durante los años 40 y 50, por ejemplo, Józef Chałasiński, uno de los iniciadores y principales participantes de los dos grandes debates de la posguerra sobre la *inteligencja* (1946, 1958).

No obstante, pese a que desde este punto de vista el mito se percibía aparentemente como un elemento irracional y nocivo que expresaba valores obsoletos, Babiuch-Luxmoore apunta que este eje del debate no deja nunca de desenvolverse en una estructura mítica de pensamiento: sencillamente se estaba tratando de sustituir un mito por otro más acorde con las exigencias del presente, respondiendo a la necesidad de construir un nuevo sistema con estructuras sociales distintas donde, por ejemplo, el elitismo que se atribuía a la *inteligencja* decimonónica no tenía cabida.

El segundo eje, que compartían tanto líneas más próximas a la oficialidad como las opositoras y otros grupos diversos, consistía en aprovechar el mito de la *inteligencja* decimonónica con fines ideológicos y políticos propios, dada su importancia en la historia de Polonia, su contribución a la creación de lazos sociales o su vinculación a la idea de servicio nacional y de vanguardia social¹⁵⁰.

Así pues, durante los años 40 y 50 la visión oficial marxista de la *inteligencja* fue esencialmente negativa: se la consideraba una clase inútil, hermética, elitista, improductiva y antisocialista¹⁵¹ que disfrutó de privilegios inmerecidos en el pasado. Simultáneamente, el régimen comunista polaco aspiró a crear una “nueva” *inteligencja* fiel a la ideología imperante, aprovechando, de manera utilitarista, algunas características de la “vieja”, al igual que hicieron décadas antes los soviéticos¹⁵². En unos momentos en los que el nuevo régimen de la PRL buscaba fuentes de legitimidad para reconstruir las estructuras sociales y el país, el modelo de guía y vanguardia que había encarnado la *inteligencja* podía ser útil si se asimilaba a la idea marxista-leninista de vanguardia revolucionaria y se sustituía la protección de la cultura e identidad nacionales por la defensa del aparato estatal¹⁵³. Obreros y campesinos afines al comunismo constituyeron las bases de esta “nueva” *inteligencja* con la que se pretendió copar los puestos burocráticos y de dirección política de la PRL. Su servicio a la nación ya no tendría que ver con valores humanistas o la lucha por la independencia, sino con una postura profesional, racional y pragmática¹⁵⁴. Este experimento de sustitución, en cambio, no sólo no tuvo el éxito esperado, sino que produjo, además, efectos contraproducentes en décadas posteriores, pues los “nuevos” *inteligenci* empezaron a

¹⁵⁰ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 93-98, 120-131.

¹⁵¹ No eran éstas ideas del todo nuevas: dos de los grandes partidos políticos polacos del período de entreguerras, el socialista (PPS) y la nacional-democracia (*endecja*), compartían, desde su fundación a finales del siglo XIX, esta visión negativa de la *inteligencja*, si bien, paradójicamente, muchos líderes y seguidores de estos partidos formaban parte de ella. Micińska: “Dzieje inteligencji...”, 66-69.

¹⁵² Hasta los propios intelectuales marxistas que contribuyeron a la creación del Estado soviético fueron víctimas de las purgas de los años 30. Billington: *El icono...*, 718, y en general WERTH, Nicolas: “Un estado contra su pueblo. Violencias, temores y represiones en la Unión Soviética”, en COURTOIS, Stéphane, WERTH, Nicolas *et al.*: *El libro negro del comunismo*, Barcelona, Ediciones B, 2010 (1997): 61-355, esp. 176-177.

¹⁵³ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 93, 98-99 111 y 123.

¹⁵⁴ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 100-101; Żarnowski: “Inteligencja w Polsce...”, 85.

asemejarse por voluntad propia a la “vieja” *inteligencja* en cuanto a estilo de vida y sistema de valores. Con lo cual, con el tiempo, el origen de la oposición intelectual a los regímenes comunistas no sólo provino de una “vieja” *inteligencja* empobrecida y degradada socio-profesionalmente, sino también de esas nuevas élites comunistas que se habían transformado en disidencia¹⁵⁵.

A partir de 1956, en el espíritu de un “camino polaco hacia el socialismo” (*polska droga do socjalizmu*), el gobierno de Władysław Gomułka comenzó a apoyarse más en las tradiciones nacionales como fuente de legitimación en lugar de en el marxismo, y la “vieja” *inteligencja* pudo ocupar cierto espacio que antes no tenía en esta nueva configuración¹⁵⁶.

Durante los años 60, pero sobre todo en los 70, el retrato que se hace de la “nueva” *inteligencja* en la prensa se aproxima al modelo de intelectual o de grupo técnico profesional, es decir, un grupo de carácter universal, no asociado a la idea de nación ni a Polonia en particular, y carente de compromisos políticos. Sin embargo, a la altura de 1971 Bohdan Cywiński, miembro de círculos católicos críticos con la PRL, publicó una obra sobre los intelectuales polacos del siglo XIX que, pese a no poder esquivar la censura hasta más de una década después, se convirtió desde el principio en una contrapropuesta del relato oficial y en una fuente de inspiración para muchos futuros integrantes de la oposición del país. En este libro, titulado *Rodowody niepokornych* (*Los orígenes de los insumisos*) —del que hablaremos también en el Capítulo 1—, Cywiński reivindica y reaviva el espíritu irredento e insumiso de la *inteligencja* polaca clásica y muestra a sus lectores cómo ésta siempre trató de ser fiel a sí misma en tiempos trágicos y de protesta social¹⁵⁷.

En las dos últimas décadas del período comunista, las nociones sobre la *inteligencja* en el debate público siguen, sin grandes cambios, en las líneas y con las funciones ya mencionadas anteriormente, que se ajustan *grosso modo* a las tres maneras de relacionarse con el pasado que tenían los *inteligenci* polacos (descritas en el apartado sobre los mitos). Desde las publicaciones oficiales se continúa presentando a la *inteligencja* técnica de una forma más positiva que a la clásica humanista, y se le da un valor casi exclusivamente profesional. Se argumenta también que la “vieja” *inteligencja* forma parte del pasado, o bien, recurriendo al materialismo histórico, que se trata de una clase “residual” de la fase capitalista-burguesa, muy secundaria, que desaparecerá definitivamente una vez que termine el proceso de transición al socialismo en Polonia, cuando la división entre trabajo intelectual y trabajo físico deje de existir.

Por otro lado, y sobre todo desde posiciones críticas con el régimen comunista, persiste el retrato tradicional mítico de la *inteligencja*, que la vincula con un determinado *etos* social y la considera simultáneamente un fenómeno histórico y suprahistórico. Los rasgos básicos, con connotaciones tanto positivas como negativas, que se le atribuyen a la *inteligencja* decimonónica en este tipo de discursos son: el cultivo de las tradiciones nobiliarias polacas (libertad, igualdad entre sus miembros, reticencias hacia la autoridad central), el servicio a la nación, un carácter elitista (autoridad moral, creación de modelos...) e insumiso y la indiferencia hacia valores pragmáticos.

¹⁵⁵ PALSKA, Hanna: “Walka o kadry i pierwsze rzesze ‘wykształciuchów’. Nowa inteligencja w stalinizmie”, en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, 129-159; Domański: “Wstęp”, 10; Bartoszek: “Habitus polskiej inteligencji...”, 66-69; Rudnicki: “O inteligencji...”, 95-96.

¹⁵⁶ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 102.

¹⁵⁷ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 102-108.

Finalmente, además de estas dos posturas, también encontramos discursos sobre la *inteligencja* enfocados hacia el futuro, que suelen partir de una valoración negativa del presente y plantean un cambio o la creación de algo hasta entonces inexistente¹⁵⁸.

3. Oposición

Los *inteligenci* sobre los que trabajamos proceden de esferas y grupos opositores con creencias e ideologías distintas, incluso muy dispares en ocasiones. No obstante, en esta investigación nos centramos especialmente en determinadas características compartidas, relacionadas con su identidad como *inteligencja* y con su forma de percibir la historia de Polonia y el paso del tiempo en general. En este apartado nos ocuparemos de la definición de “oposición” en el contexto polaco, recalcando el cambio de estrategia que supuso la fundación del Comité de Defensa Obrera.

Tal y como sucedió con los “mitos” y la “intelligentsia”, la “oposición”, incluso si nos centramos exclusivamente en el caso polaco, no cuenta con una única definición y, además, compite o se complementa con otros conceptos que describen fenómenos bastante similares.

Es lo que sucede, por ejemplo, con el término “disidencia” o “disentimiento” (*dissent* en inglés). En una enciclopedia española del año 1985, la palabra “disidente” se asocia, entre otras acepciones, a las personas de Europa Oriental que se oponían en aquellos momentos a la política oficial, especialmente los intelectuales¹⁵⁹. En esta línea, Robert Zuzowski cree que la disidencia es un fenómeno propio de la era post-estalinista, que surge cuando se redujo la represión en la zona. Para este autor, “disidencia” supone hacer un esfuerzo de crítica, exhortar, persuadir e intentar ser escuchado, tanto a través de canales permitidos como no permitidos, mientras que “oposición” hace referencia a un grupo político organizado que tiene como objetivo echar al gobierno del poder y reemplazarlo por otro de su elección. El propio Zuzowski reconoce que, en este sentido, las fronteras entre “disidencia” y “oposición” son difusas en el contexto comunista, y apunta además que, a su juicio, “disidencia” e *inteligencja* son equiparables¹⁶⁰.

No obstante, tanto en la vieja enciclopedia de los años 80 como en el diccionario de la RAE, “disidencia” contiene otro matiz: implica una separación de lo oficial, o de una doctrina, creencia o conducta comunes. Por tanto, al hablar de “disidentes” estaríamos refiriéndonos a aquellas personas que apoyaron y se comprometieron inicialmente con el régimen comunista de forma abierta y que más adelante, por diversas discrepancias, se opusieron a él, caso de algunos *inteligenci* como Jacek Kuroń, Krystyna Kersten, Jerzy Holzer, Tadeusz Łepkowski o Jerzy Jedlicki. Es decir, *dysydent* y *opozycjonista* no serían sinónimos, sino que la disidencia sería un tipo concreto de oposición con unos orígenes determinados. Cuando empleemos los términos “disidente” o “disidencia” en este trabajo, en lugar de “oposición”, será siempre en este sentido más restringido¹⁶¹.

Por otro lado, establecer con precisión en qué consiste ser un opositor no es tan fácil como parece a primera vista. Andrzej Friszke, uno de los investigadores que más ha trabajado sobre los movimientos de oposición en la PRL, se pregunta cuáles son los límites entre “oposición” y “conformismo”, y si podrían llamarse “opositores” aquellas

¹⁵⁸ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 63-91, 108-113, 208-209.

¹⁵⁹ *Diccionario Enciclopédico Grijalbo*, Barcelona, Grijalbo, 1986.

¹⁶⁰ Zuzowski: *Political Dissent...*, 6-7.

¹⁶¹ Agradezco esta observación a los participantes en el Seminario celebrado el 20 de noviembre de 2012 en el Instituto de Historia de la Universidad de Łódź, organizado por el prof. Rafał Stobiecki.

personas e instituciones que sólo pretendían mejorar o corregir el sistema existente. Eso lleva, a su vez, a preguntarse qué clase de régimen y de Estado fue la República Popular de Polonia¹⁶².

De acuerdo con Friszke, el Estado polaco entre 1945 y 1989 tuvo una naturaleza dual: por un lado, la PRL tenía muchos rasgos de un Estado polaco auténtico, organizó la vida colectiva y permitió la supervivencia y desarrollo de la nación (reconstrucción y modernización del país, industrialización, urbanización, reforma agraria, amplio acceso a la cultura y la educación, mejora de las condiciones de vida de los más necesitados, ausencia de desempleo...); por otro, se había formado bajo los designios de la URSS, y el control soviético sobre Polonia era una forma de ausencia de libertad (falta de soberanía y de independencia en política exterior, fuerte represión durante la posguerra...). Cada logro o aspecto positivo del nuevo Estado tenía, por así decirlo, una contrapartida.

En 1944, tras el fracaso del Levantamiento de Varsovia contra los nazis, la “liberación-ocupación” de las tierras polacas por el Ejército Rojo y la creación de un gobierno *de facto* para Polonia desde Moscú (el Comité Polaco de Liberación Nacional, PKWN), la población, agotada y diezmada por la Guerra, asumió en su mayoría la nueva situación y transigió con los resultados falseados de las elecciones de 1947, que dieron la victoria al partido respaldado por el Kremlin, el comunista PPR (Polska Partia Robotnicza, Partido Polaco de los Trabajadores), rebautizado como PZPR en 1948. Muchos polacos estaban descontentos por la falta de libertades y las carencias materiales, además de por las discrepancias ideológicas, mientras que otros aceptaron conscientemente el nuevo régimen porque, a su juicio, había mejorado las condiciones respecto de la preguerra. Simultáneamente, el terror generado por la represión política y la vigilancia generalizadas, la sensación de no poder cambiar las cosas y el temor a una nueva guerra hizo que buena parte de la población percibiera ese *statu quo* como el menor de los males¹⁶³. Aunque resulte de entrada paradójico, muchas veces resistencia (*opór*) y adaptación (*przystosowanie*) van de la mano, y precisamente aclimatarse a algunas cosas y resistirse a otras fue lo que hicieron la mayoría de los polacos que se quedaron en el país después de 1945, también los *inteligenci* no-comunistas¹⁶⁴, que aceptaron las nuevas reglas de la vida pública para poder participar en ella y manifestar su opinión hasta donde se lo permitiese la censura¹⁶⁵.

Pero, como recalca Friszke, no es lo mismo “resistirse” que “oponerse”: la “resistencia” supone un intento de boicotear ciertas medidas o realidades, principalmente en una esfera simbólica, es de corta duración y tiene un carácter relativamente espontáneo. La “oposición”, en cambio, requiere una actividad prolongada en el tiempo y consciente, respaldada por un programa ideológico destinado al logro de determinados cambios políticos planeados de antemano por un grupo de personas¹⁶⁶. Esta definición, más amplia que la de Zuzowski, engloba a la *inteligencja* sobre la que trabajaremos.

Otros autores, como Piotr Szwajcer, consideran que la oposición también forma una comunidad diferenciada porque sus integrantes han padecido distintos tipos de

¹⁶² Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna...*, 583.

¹⁶³ Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna...*, 583-585.

¹⁶⁴ Empleo esta definición tan amplia para abarcar a todos aquellos *inteligenci* que, desde distintos espectros ideológicos o religiosos, nunca apoyaron al régimen ni fueron miembros del PZPR.

¹⁶⁵ Intervención de Andrzej Friszke en el debate “Opozycja i opór społeczny w Polsce po 1956 roku — stan badań i nowe perspektywy. Dyskusja”, en KOZŁOWSKI, Tomasz y OLASZEK, Jan (pod red.): *Opozycja i opór społeczny w Polsce po 1956 roku*, Warszawa, IPN, 2011, 15-16.

¹⁶⁶ Intervención de Andrzej Friszke en el debate “Opozycja i opór ...”, 11-12; también Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna...*, 5.

represión a causa de sus “crímenes no criminales”¹⁶⁷, es decir, por ser ideológicamente contrarios al régimen imperante y tratar de ejercer distintas libertades (política, de expresión, de prensa, de reunión...) que éste calificaba como “delitos” si constituían una amenaza a su monopolio del poder y escapaban a su control. Esto plantea nuevos interrogantes: ¿para ser un opositor es necesario (si bien no suficiente) haber sido represaliado alguna vez? ¿Se puede ser opositor y evitar la represión? ¿Y qué es exactamente “represión”?

Empezando por la última pregunta, cabe señalar aquí que, en el ámbito de las ciencias sociales, la represión queda englobada dentro de los estudios sobre “violencia política”, término que Eduardo González Calleja define como “... el empleo consciente (aunque no siempre premeditado), o la amenaza del uso, de la fuerza física por parte de individuos, entidades, grupos o partidos que buscan el control de los espacios de poder político, la manipulación de las decisiones en todas o parte de las instancias de gobierno y, en última instancia, la conquista, la conservación o la reforma del Estado”¹⁶⁸. En nuestro caso, la violencia política es practicada primera y principalmente por un Estado autoritario, de signo comunista y mediatizado por una potencia extranjera, en un contexto de creciente disconformidad de la población hacia sus políticas.

El espectro represivo de una autoridad es muy amplio y las formas de persecución de individuos y colectivos por parte de un poder van desde las más brutales e impactantes hasta las más sutiles. La violencia física, los arrestos de distinta duración, la cárcel o los despidos son sólo las más evidentes. La censura, por ejemplo, también puede entenderse como una forma de represión intelectual, y como presión psicológica el acoso en el trabajo, los registros y destrozos de domicilios, las amenazas a familiares y amigos, o hacia uno mismo, que convencieron a muchos de que emigrar era su única salida. Existen, además, numerosas demostraciones de fuerza de carácter público: marchas, actos, manifestaciones, mítines, maniobras... Como mínimo, el poder imperante trata de obstaculizar y limitar la influencia en la sociedad de las corrientes opositoras¹⁶⁹. Pero, además, el simple temor a la represión (a estar siendo vigilados, a ser denunciados por manifestarse o hacer algo “ilegal”) es otro tipo o grado de represión en sí, pues altera el comportamiento de las personas inhibiendo su participación activa en iniciativas contrarias a la autoridad¹⁷⁰. Los opositores, en tanto tales, son plenamente conscientes de que el poder puede castigarles por las actividades políticas que desarrollan y de que, por tanto, tienen algo que perder (libertad, puesto de trabajo, integridad física, compañeros y familia, incluso su propia vida), pero aún así asumen, en mayor o menor medida, ese riesgo. La amenaza de la represión siempre está presente; eso no significa que ésta se materialice en algún momento, pero es lo más habitual si se adquiere un compromiso a largo plazo y se realizan actividades opositoras asiduamente.

¹⁶⁷ SZWAJECER, Piotr: “Opposition Against Society: In Pursuit of a ‘Normal’ Life”, in Wedel (ed.): *The Unplanned Society*..., 223.

¹⁶⁸ GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, Eduardo: *La violencia en la política: perspectivas teóricas sobre el empleo deliberado de la fuerza en los conflictos de poder*, Madrid, CSIC, 2008, 270-271.

¹⁶⁹ Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna*..., 5.

¹⁷⁰ González Calleja: *La violencia*..., esp. 261-292. Siguiendo a Foucault, González Calleja apunta que, en las guerras hobbesianas, más que conflictos reales había una guerra de representaciones, pues los individuos se anticipaban a las posibles amenazas cuando se las imaginaban, y actuaban en consecuencia para esquivarlas. Bronisław Baczkó también trata la cuestión de la represión centrándose en la Unión Soviética de la década de 1930. Recalca el impacto que tiene el terror en la población no directamente represaliada, y cómo en esos años se sucedieron olas de violencia, seguidas de propaganda y de la puesta en escena del terror, transformándolo en un espectáculo. BACZKO, Bronisław: *Les imaginaires sociaux. Mémoires et espoirs collectifs*, Paris, Payot, 1984, 55-62.

La fundación en 1976 del Comité de Defensa Obrera (Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR), sobre el que hablaremos más adelante, supuso un cambio estratégico trascendental para la oposición política en Polonia. Las protestas desarrolladas antes, en marzo de 1968 y diciembre de 1970, no suponían un ataque directo al sistema comunista: los manifestantes exigían mejoras y la puesta en práctica de determinados derechos y libertades, pero consideraban a la PRL su patria. En cambio, el KOR trascendió la esfera de la protesta e inició una lucha sistemática y organizada, de carácter pacífico, contra el gobierno comunista. En lugar de situarse *dentro* del sistema, de aceptar sus pautas y costumbres y de tener como interlocutor fundamental al Estado, como había sucedido hasta entonces, la nueva oposición centró su atención en la sociedad polaca y en la presión que ésta podía ejercer desde *fuera* del sistema a través del KOR o de otros movimientos similares. De esta forma, se ponía directamente en cuestión a la PRL como Estado y las aspiraciones de independencia se generalizaron como nunca antes. Sin embargo, el sistema de la PRL no sólo se veía como un elemento ajeno a la sociedad o como el defensor de los intereses soviéticos en territorio polaco, sino también como un poder intermediario entre Moscú y su propia sociedad, del que podían obtenerse concesiones en nombre del bienestar de la nación; en definitiva, un incómodo pero imprescindible compañero de viaje en el camino hacia el cambio político.

Desde 1976, los movimientos de oposición se encargaron de reivindicar los derechos sociales, nacionales y ciudadanos; lucharon por la libertad de creación, por el acceso a la cultura creada por la comunidad emigrante polaca, por la recuperación de tradiciones nacionales falseadas o silenciadas, por poder reflexionar libremente sobre la historia y la cultura y, finalmente, por despertar entre los polacos el deseo de tener un estado soberano e independiente. Sin embargo, aunque sus propuestas estaban mucho más orientadas hacia los cambios políticos que hacia los económicos, fueron reacios a diseñar un modelo preciso del Estado al que aspiraban¹⁷¹.

El entramado opositor que se tejió a lo largo de la segunda mitad de los años 70 necesitaba considerables ingresos tanto para llevar a cabo sus proyectos sociales (ej. ayudar a los obreros represaliados en junio del 76 y sus familias) como para subsistir y mantenerse. Además de pagar a los opositores “a tiempo completo”, todos los trabajadores del sistema editorial clandestino *drugi obieg*, que se desarrolló exponencialmente a partir de entonces, cobraban un sueldo (articulistas, periodistas, editores, distribuidores, secretarías, conferenciantes, managers, conductores, librerías...), y requerían imprentas, papel, tinta, máquinas de escribir, grabadoras, coches, ordenadores o cámaras de vídeo para desempeñar su labor. Una parte del dinero y de la maquinaria se obtenía gracias a la propia venta de las publicaciones *drugi obieg* y a la generosidad de simpatizantes, personas anónimas u opositores que ponían, por ejemplo, su coche o su piso, así como todo el material útil que pudieran reunir, a disposición de un movimiento o de una editorial para transportar mercancías, celebrar reuniones, etc.

Otra parte muy importante de su financiación procedía de países occidentales: había donaciones y suscripciones organizadas por particulares, sindicatos, organismos gubernamentales y distintas organizaciones políticas o de emigrantes polacos, además de varias becas o premios, como las del Congreso de Estados Unidos. Algunas personas también trabajaban para los corresponsales de prensa extranjera haciendo de intérpretes o facilitando contactos. Los pagos se efectuaban entonces de distintas formas: bien en

¹⁷¹ Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna...*, 587-590.

metálico (preferentemente en dólares), bien en especie (artículos occidentales, una invitación a un restaurante de lujo...).

La distinción entre ingresos para uso privado e ingresos para la organización opositora no estaba, generalmente, del todo clara, tanto menos cuanto menos formalizado estuviera el movimiento. Durante el período legal de *Solidarność* (agosto 1980-diciembre 1981) la transparencia fue mayor en este sentido, pero tras la aplicación de la Ley Marcial y el paso a la clandestinidad, las cuentas de los movimientos opositores volvieron a su estado previo de opacidad. Evidentemente, los opositores más conocidos y con más contactos tenían un mayor interés para la prensa internacional y, por tanto, más oportunidades de ganar dinero que otros, además de ciertos privilegios o mejores oportunidades para ellos mismos y su círculo más cercano (posibilidad de publicar fuera sus libros y artículos, salidas al extranjero, becas, compra de vivienda...). Optar por la emigración, en ese caso, no parecía la mejor solución: al quedarse en Polonia y asumir los riesgos que eso conllevaba (encarcelamiento, registros de sus apartamentos, confiscación de libros, amenazas y chantajes...), los opositores más activos o destacados ganaban prestigio social entre sus simpatizantes y la población en general, pues parecían estar haciendo lo moralmente correcto a pesar de las adversidades; podían quedarse al menos cerca de su familia y amigos, conservar su vivienda, y disponer de más dinero gracias al pago en dólares y su cambio ventajoso a złoty (la moneda polaca).

Curiosamente, el hecho de que entre la clase gobernante y los comunistas hubiera una especie de “aristocracia” que disfrutaba de privilegios totalmente inaccesibles para el resto de la población (productos occidentales, carne en abundancia, coches de lujo, casas...) fue siempre algo muy criticado desde las filas de la oposición; sin embargo, de forma más o menos inconsciente, en el seno de ésta también se fueron formando paulatinamente élites económicas. Aún así, mientras que en el ámbito oficial todo eran ventajas, en el caso de la oposición los inconvenientes eran considerables, pues sus miembros se exponían mucho más que otros a la represión gubernamental y algunos pasaron escondidos meses o incluso años para eludir la cárcel después de 1981, por lo que sus privilegios eran una especie de sistema compensatorio socialmente aceptado¹⁷².

¹⁷² WRÓBLEWSKI, Tadeusz: “The Opposition and Money”, in Wedel (ed.): *The Unplanned Society...*, 239-246; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 100-107, 151-152.

4. Las reflexiones históricas de la inteligencia y las tesis “Sobre el concepto de historia” de Walter Benjamin. Conciencia histórica e historización del tiempo presente

We may like to consolidate our own identities by ascribing to them antecedents that make the end result at least feasible, but more important is the resultant recognition of our own historicity - of the fact that we are ourselves a part of history, not only a product of past history but also a potential agent for history in the future. (...)

Viewed from an alternative perspective, our own position no longer appears as inevitable and as the necessary outcome of some predetermined historical process. It is the result of numerous contingencies (of things that, by chance, turned out one way rather than another, and affected future events accordingly), and we can see that, for the future, we actually do have a choice.

Beverley Southgate: “Intellectual history/ history of ideas”

La historia es más que lo ocurrido.

Walter Benjamin

Si nos aproximamos a las reflexiones y trabajos históricos publicados por los intelectuales polacos de la oposición, podemos detectar ciertas semejanzas entre ellos y las tesis “Sobre el concepto de historia” de Walter Benjamin¹⁷³, entendidas éstas últimas como un enfoque teórico y epistemológico acerca de los “vencidos” y las “víctimas de la historia”, además de como una advertencia sobre las trágicas consecuencias del supuesto o mal llamado “progreso”¹⁷⁴.

Según Benjamin, sólo aquellas personas que sean víctimas o víctimas potenciales de la historia pueden tener acceso al conocimiento y la recordación del “pasado que no fue” en momentos de grave peligro, y son capaces de hacer una revolución política y hermenéutica haciendo saltar el tiempo vacío y homogéneo (*continuum*) impuesto por los “vencedores” a los “vencidos”.

Esto puede aplicarse al caso que nos ocupa, como demostraremos más adelante. Sin embargo, empezaremos por señalar dos inconvenientes iniciales: los intelectuales polacos no eran ni el *Lumpenproletariat* ni los materialistas históricos a los que Walter Benjamin aparentemente se refería en sus tesis. Como se ha visto antes, eran, y aún son, un grupo social privilegiado. Además, pertenecían a movimientos que, de hecho, se oponían a un gobierno comunista. No obstante, también podían ser considerados “víctimas por partida doble” en el siguiente sentido.

¹⁷³ BENJAMIN, Walter: *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* [Hg. Gérald Raulet], Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Me fundamento principalmente en el estudio e interpretación de las tesis de Benjamin del filósofo Reyes Mate: MATE, Reyes: *Medianoche en la historia. Comentarios a las tesis de Walter Benjamin “Sobre el concepto de historia”*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta, 2006, así como en LÖWY, Michael: *Walter Benjamin: aviso de incendio. Una lectura de las tesis “Sobre el concepto de la historia”*, Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003. Del primero, véase especialmente la Introducción y los comentarios a las tesis II, VI, VII, XII, XIV, XV, XVI y XVII. La obra de Mate también se ha publicado en francés: *Minuit dans l’histoire: commentaires des thèses de Walter Benjamin “Sur le concept d’histoire”*, [Paris], Éd. Mix, 2009.

Estoy en deuda con Elena Hernández Sandoica por hablarnos de Walter Benjamin cuando fuimos sus alumnos, y también con Paula Martos por haberme recomendado que me acercase nuevamente a su obra, y por hablarme de los archivos de Emanuel Ringelblum por primera vez.

Para empezar, desde finales del siglo XVIII existe una tradición cultural muy extendida en Polonia que Domańska definió como “cultura de la herida”¹⁷⁵, aunque también podría describirse como cultura de la derrota, de las víctimas o del dolor. Tal y como señalábamos antes, esto se encuentra estrechamente relacionado con la observación de Mircea Eliade acerca de los mitos en tiempos modernos: los habitantes de las naciones modernas que perciben su historia como un “terror continuo” no pueden apoyar ni creer en el historicismo, porque el “progreso” que éste invoca únicamente supone mejoras para otros a costa de más dominio y humillación para ellos, por lo que no es de extrañar que recurran a otros tipos de percepción, como la cíclica. En el caso polaco, algunos “pasados frustrados” no han dejado de ser recordados periódicamente, especialmente en los ámbitos intelectual y artístico. Por tanto, la cultura de la recordación nacional en Polonia se ha construido en buena medida a partir de desenlaces negativos, conflictos, derrotas, oportunidades malogradas e intentos fallidos.

El cuadro de Jacek Malczewski “Melancholia” (1890-1894) es un buen ejemplo de ello¹⁷⁶: mientras un pintor trabaja en su estudio, más de cincuenta personas salen desfilando de su lienzo, llenando la estancia (Imagen 1). Malczewski retrata a los *kosynierzy*¹⁷⁷, los participantes y los caídos en los levantamientos polacos del siglo XIX, niños, viudas desesperadas, sacerdotes, músicos y artistas, a los desencantados y los indiferentes encadenados como convictos... Muchos de ellos llevan armas, como bayonetas, guadañas de guerra, sables y escopetas, mientras que un trío en primer plano porta un violín, un libro y un pincel, como si las artes fueran otro instrumento igualmente válido para preservar y luchar por la identidad polaca. Asimismo, en la parte inferior del cuadro puede verse a un hombre sujeta un reloj de arena y un cetro: una referencia a Cronos o Saturno, es decir, al inexorable paso del tiempo y la destrucción que conlleva, quizás también al tiempo que los polacos habían “perdido” debido a las particiones. La mayoría de los personajes se dirige en varias filas hacia la ventana del lado derecho del estudio, y por tanto hacia la luz, la libertad o, en otras palabras, *adelante*. Sin embargo, nadie es capaz de saltar fuera: la negra figura encapuchada que representa al destino y la muerte se lo impide, de modo que caen, se contorsionan, giran y dan vueltas en un incipiente caos de perspectivas, como sugiriendo un sino inevitablemente cíclico. Pero además de una alegoría del destino trágico de los polacos faltos de su propio Estado, “Melancholia” es también una reflexión sobre el papel del Arte y los artistas polacos como visionarios y su misión hacia sus compatriotas, el desarrollo del ciclo de la vida desde la infancia hasta la muerte y, finalmente, un intento de descubrir el misterio del futuro de la nación polaca¹⁷⁸. *Artistas-inteligenci*, el lamento

¹⁷⁵ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 254-255.

¹⁷⁶ Agradezco a Maciej Górny el haberme dado a conocer esta obra. “Melancholia” puede contemplarse en el Museo Nacional (Muzeum Narodowe) de la ciudad de Poznań: <http://www.mnp.art.pl/en/>

¹⁷⁷ Los *kosynierzy* (sing.: *kosynier*) eran unas unidades militares de a pie formadas por voluntarios y milicianos, generalmente de origen campesino, armadas con guadañas de guerra. Aparecieron por vez primera en la insurrección liderada por Tadeusz Kościuszko de 1794 y pronto se convirtieron en uno de los símbolos de la lucha polaca por la independencia.

¹⁷⁸ Véanse los comentarios de Agnieszka Ławniczakowa sobre “Melancholia” en el catálogo *Jacek Malczewski, 1854-1929. Paris, musée d'Orsay, 15 février-14 mai 2000*, Paris, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000, 68 y 70. Otros trabajos importantes de Malczewski que abordan cuestiones similares son “W tumanie” [“En la polvareda”] (1893-1894), símbolo de la madre patria cautiva y sus hijos caídos, y “Błędné koło” [“Círculo vicioso”] (1895-1897), donde el pintor reflexiona sobre el tiempo eterno y cíclico y sobre el rol del artista; ambos son analizados por Ławniczakowa en el mismo catálogo: 184 y 71-72 respectivamente. En inglés: *Malczewski, a vision of Poland: an exhibition organised by Barbican Art Gallery and the National Museum, Poznań* (selected and compiled by Agnieszka Ławniczakowa), London, Barbican Art Gallery, 1990. Un catálogo en castellano que incluye algunas

de un pasado palpitante, el presente letárgico y cautivo y la incógnita de un futuro que, no obstante, se toma muy en serio, unidos e immortalizados en un mismo lienzo.



Imagen 1

Historia y memoria se entrelazan con frecuencia en los países de Europa Centro-Oriental. En Polonia, el recuerdo de los caídos, de los levantamientos reprimidos (especialmente los de noviembre de 1830 y enero de 1863, junto con las revueltas y protestas en la etapa de la PRL) y de los intentos de reforma fallidos (como la Constitución del 3 de mayo de 1791, o 1956) constituyen una parte integrante de la tradición histórica polaca. Esto incluye las *białe plamy* (manchas blancas), es decir, episodios del siglo XX polaco que las autoridades del régimen comunista negaban o rehusaban abordar, convirtiéndose en una especie de tabú oficial, como el período de la Segunda República (1918-1939), los conflictos entre rusos y polacos o la masacre de Katyń (abril-mayo de 1940). Desde el siglo XIX hasta, al menos, el período de la República Popular de Polonia, muchos polacos compartían un amargo sentimiento de pérdida: se veían a sí mismos como “vencidos” y a la nación polaca como a una “víctima” de la historia. Una historia que pensaban que, en muchas ocasiones, les había venido impuesta desde más allá de sus fronteras.

En esos tiempos, la *inteligencja* polaca se convirtió tanto en creadora de mitos como en un mito en sí misma, y sus miembros se autoproclamaron portavoces de los valores morales y los intereses de la nación. Si tomamos el significado y las tareas de la *inteligencja* en su sentido europeo-oriental más clásico y restringido, este estatus suponía mantener una actitud crítica hacia el poder político, cierto prestigio social y, sobre todo, ser la conciencia y la voz de la sociedad polaca en el foro público. Así pues, los intelectuales opositores polacos serían, por un lado, el altavoz de una “nación-víctima” y, por otro, víctimas ellos mismos, porque su compromiso social y político les llevaba a actuar en circunstancias peligrosas o correr riesgos que muchas veces

acababan en fracaso o algún tipo de represión, como deportaciones a Siberia, ejecuciones, sentencias de muerte, cárcel, despidos, palizas, amenazas, etc., por no hablar de la emigración, una de las consecuencias más destacables de las derrotas en el país: las oleadas de emigrantes forzosos tras un levantamiento o revuelta frustrados han sido recurrentes y, por ende, tristemente “tradicionales” hasta los años 80 del siglo pasado.

Además, algunos de los intelectuales polacos que eran historiadores o escribieron sobre historia tenían mucho más que ver con el historiador Marxista heterodoxo que Benjamin imaginaba de lo que en un principio pudiera parecer. Esto resulta especialmente claro en el caso de los disidentes (esto es, opositores que eran antiguos defensores y miembros del Partido Comunista) que, pese a ser muy críticos después con el gobierno y el sistema polacos, se mantuvieron fieles a sus ideales de izquierdas (Jerzy Holzer, Krystyna Kersten, Tadeusz Łepkowski...). Otro ejemplo destacado es Bronisław Geremek porque, desde sus primeros años como estudiante de Historia Medieval, empezó a mostrar un gran interés hacia aquellos que sufrían y centró sus principales investigaciones en los pobres y los marginados, así como en el poder estatal que quería controlarlos o deshacerse de ellos en la transición hacia la Edad Moderna.

En ese sentido, los intelectuales polacos de la oposición pueden considerarse “víctimas por partida doble” y, como Benjamin apuntaba, sólo aquellos “vencidos” que perciben el peligro (es decir, una amenaza para la existencia bien de un individuo o de todo un pueblo y sus tradiciones) pueden experimentar la “revelación” y atisbar el panorama de la historia al completo, que incluye la gran miríada de víctimas olvidadas. Son los únicos que están cualificados para escribir una historia llena de “tiempo ahora” (*Jetztzeit*) y no la historia fáctica de los “vencedores”. No obstante, para lograrlo las víctimas del presente también deben luchar, como hacen algunos de los personajes de “Melancholia” y el propio Malczewski al recordar a los caídos, porque las tesis de Benjamin van dirigidas a aquellos que asumen conscientemente la experiencia del sufrimiento y se posicionan contra sus causas. Por tanto, el proceso de toma de conciencia absoluta de la propia historicidad tan sólo puede completarse a través de la acción, pidiendo justicia y demandando recordación¹⁷⁹.

El conocimiento y recordación del “pasado que no fue” es una lucha hermenéutica y política que requiere, en palabras de Benjamin, un “salto de tigre al pasado” (*der Tigersprung ins Vergangene*). El filósofo alemán tenía una visión profundamente personal no sólo del marxismo/materialismo histórico, sino también del mesianismo que, aparte de ser otro ingrediente fundamental de sus tesis y pensamiento, curiosamente también es un elemento crucial en la tradición cultural polaca en un sentido más ortodoxo¹⁸⁰. Según Reyes Mate, el mesianismo de Benjamin se basaba en una convicción filosófica en lugar de religiosa: los “vencidos”, vivos o muertos, están esperando una experiencia de redención mundana que dé un significado a su sufrimiento pasado. Alimentan la esperanza de que un día sus proyectos fracasados sean llevados a cabo por generaciones futuras y adquieran finalmente sentido. Hoy, los “vencidos” pueden ser “vengados” de algún modo a través de la *recordación*¹⁸¹, un tipo especial de

¹⁷⁹ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 20, 31, 116, 124, 239-240.

¹⁸⁰ Mate: *Medianoche...*; Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 11-36, 169, 172, específicamente para el caso polaco: TÖRNQUIST PLEWA, Barbara: “The Complex of an Unwanted Child: The Meanings of Europe in Polish Discourse”, en MALMBORG, Mikael af y STRÅTH, Bo (eds.): *The Meaning of Europe. Variety and Contention within and among Nations*, Oxford/ New York, Berg, 2002, 215-241; Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”.

¹⁸¹ Benjamin empleó la palabra alemana *Eingedenken*, que tradujo en la versión francesa de sus Tesis como *souvenance*. Reyes Mate eligió, a su vez, el término “recordación” en *Medianoche en la historia*.

memoria que interpreta los proyectos frustrados de la historia no como meros “efectos colaterales” del progreso sino como injusticias pendientes. El pasado posible, malogrado por la violencia humana y por motivos más allá de la voluntad de las víctimas, tan sólo puede estar presente si se “redime” su fracaso. Constituye una especie de segunda oportunidad para un pasado; por tanto, una experiencia frustrada se convierte en una expectativa de la historia. Si la vida de *todos*, y no sólo de los “vencedores” o de aquellos que siguen vivos, *importa*, las vidas frustradas de los muertos quedarían conectadas a los intereses de los vivos y cualquier proyecto que conllevara odio u olvido hacia los caídos sería rechazado, dado que olvidar a las víctimas supone añadir un crimen hermenéutico al crimen físico¹⁸².

Las Tesis de Benjamin son una advertencia acerca de la Modernidad y el tipo de “progreso” que ésta conlleva a costa de otros seres humanos. Igualmente, los *inteligenci* polacos de la oposición en los años setenta y ochenta pensaban que ya había habido demasiadas víctimas en su historia nacional, de modo que tomaron la no-violencia como su nuevo signo de identidad y desarrollaron un proyecto intelectual de progreso real e inclusivo, basado en los deseos de libertad política y autogobierno de la sociedad polaca. En este sentido, sus reflexiones y propuestas tenían simultáneamente un carácter holístico y dualista, puesto que su objetivo era tomar lo mejor de cada tradición pasada y unirlo. La idiosincrasia polaca, argumentaban algunos de ellos, tan sólo podía estar completa y ser plenamente comprendida cuando todas las tradiciones intelectuales y políticas del país fuesen tenidas en cuenta, incluso si se consideraban opuestas. Trataban así de fomentar un pensamiento constructivo y la cooperación entre aquellos que pensaban distinto pero compartían los mismos objetivos básicos (libertad e independencia), a fin de que nadie se quedase atrás.

En un texto escrito en 1982, el profesor emigrado Bronisław Baczko señalaba que la historia y la memoria colectiva jugaron un papel liberador dentro de Solidaridad en 1980-1981 porque permitieron a la sociedad polaca ejercer libremente el derecho a conocer el pasado y contribuyeron a denunciar y condenar el sistema comunista. Recordar y conmemorar a las víctimas con monumentos, ceremonias y distintos símbolos era una forma de dejar patentes los resultados catastróficos del “radiante futuro” prometido por las autoridades, en cuyo nombre se habían cometido numerosos crímenes y masacres. Resulta interesante el hecho de que una de las primeras y principales peticiones de los huelguistas de los astilleros de Gdańsk, en agosto de 1980, fuese la construcción de un monumento en memoria de los compañeros de trabajo asesinados durante las huelgas de diciembre de 1970. Las generaciones más jóvenes de *Solidarność* recordaban los hechos de 1970 y 1976 como sus experiencias trágicas más próximas, mientras que los miembros de más edad también tenían en mente la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el estalinismo o 1956. La construcción *de facto* de los monumentos conmemorando 1970 y 1956 fue sentida como una “venganza” y una revisión de aquellas derrotas, además de como una garantía de que tales hechos no volverían a repetirse. Los fracasos y las desventuras del pasado se habían convertido en símbolos que pregonaban una victoria definitiva y hacían que los opositores percibiesen la lucha actual como la continuación de un pasado intergeneracional, lo que aumentaba las esperanzas en el futuro. Además, la recuperación de las libertades democráticas (ejercer el derecho a la huelga, libertades sindicales y de expresión, derecho a la identidad

Más explicaciones acerca de por qué Mate entiende la “recordación” como “pensar sentido” en Mate: *Medianoche...*, nota al pie 1 para la Tesis XV: 237.

¹⁸² Mate: *Medianoche...*, 24-28, 69, 71, 119-122, 137, 141, 167, 204, 243-244, 250, 259, 290-293.

nacional...) significaba ir por delante del sistema totalitario comunista en términos de progreso real¹⁸³.

Pero la recordación no sólo provee de significado a las injusticias pasadas, también hace que el presente tenga mucho más sentido que antes. Tal y como apunta Mate, el “encuentro entre un pasado declarado in-significante y un sujeto necesitado (...) [salva] el sentido del pasado al tiempo que proyecta una nueva luz sobre el presente gracias a la cual entendemos mejor la realidad y descubrimos nuevas posibilidades suyas”¹⁸⁴. Dar “un salto de tigre al pasado” no implica reconstruir o recrear el “pasado que no fue” como podría haber sido: no se trata, pues, de una cuestión de repetición, sino de inspiración y motivación para poner en marcha un progreso verdadero a partir de entonces. Al igual que el historiador-trapero de Benjamin recoge del basurero de la historia los restos de pasados frustrados, los “vencidos” que adquieran conciencia histórica y quieran romper con los tiempos marcados por los “vencedores” deben construir un presente nuevo con los materiales de pasados fracasados, es decir, a partir de sus ruinas. Un salto productivo y revolucionario al pasado supone adueñarse de los aspectos actuales y pendientes del pasado y traerlos al presente. Y se realiza para cambiar la realidad ahora, de ahí su carácter esencialmente político¹⁸⁵.

El “tiempo ahora” (*Jetztzeit*) del que Benjamin habla en su decimocuarta tesis¹⁸⁶ supone contemplar el pasado frustrado como algo que continúa vivo, como una semilla (tesis XVII) llena de posibilidades por desarrollar, y el tiempo presente como el momento en que esas semillas-oportunidades todavía pueden germinar y por tanto hacerse reales. El instante en que un individuo o una colectividad toman conciencia del poder que tienen para cambiar el curso de los acontecimientos, pese a cualquier “objetividad racional” o “lógica” histórica, constituye una encrucijada de caminos, un momento crucial en potencia. Es, en otras palabras, un “tiempo pleno”, en contraste con el tiempo vacío y homogéneo (*continuum*) impuesto por los “vencedores”¹⁸⁷.

Barbara Törnquist Plewa define la *conciencia histórica*

... como historia viva, es decir, una historia colectiva, política e ideológicamente relevante, que da orientación e identidad al ser humano en el mundo del presente. Se distingue de la historia entendida como ciencia, cuya meta es buscar la verdad objetiva acerca de los escenarios históricos y las relaciones causales existentes entre acontecimientos pasados.¹⁸⁸

Dicho de otro modo, a pesar de que el pasado es el punto de partida, la conciencia histórica radica principalmente en el tiempo presente, entendido por Ewa Domańska como “el tiempo oportuno” (*kairos*): “un momento especial en la historia del mundo para tomar decisiones que serán cruciales para el futuro”, en estrecha relación con el *Jetztzeit* de Benjamin¹⁸⁹. Uno de los frutos de esta percepción del tiempo es un fenómeno que hemos definido como “historización del tiempo presente”.

¹⁸³ BACZKO, Bronisław: “Polska Solidarności —Pamięć eksplodująca”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 21, 1986, 121, 124, 127-128, y Meller: “Rola myślenia...”, 219-266.

¹⁸⁴ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 26. También 268.

¹⁸⁵ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 47, 117, 121-122, 225, 228-229, 231, 249-260. Relacionándolo con la construcción/destrucción de la sociedad y sus mitos y la recombinación de materiales en el proceso: White: “Catastrophe, Communal...”, 49-50.

¹⁸⁶ “Die Geschichte ist Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit sondern die von Jetztzeit erfüllte bildet”. Benjamin, “Sobre el concepto de historia”, Tesis XIV, citado en Mate: *Medianoche...*, 223, o 223-235 para el desarrollo completo de Mate sobre esa tesis.

¹⁸⁷ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 73, 243, 273-274, 277.

¹⁸⁸ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 14, nota al pie 10, traducc. propia.

¹⁸⁹ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 249-251.

Si consideramos que el término “historización” alude al proceso de construcción de un texto o historia¹⁹⁰, “historizar” el momento presente implica la inclusión de otra dimensión temporal en el proceso cognitivo: el futuro. En otras palabras, además de buscar un referente y un apoyo en el pasado y de encontrar su propio camino en el presente, una sociedad o sus élites dan un paso más allá cuando imaginan colectiva o públicamente cómo se contarán y recordarán *más adelante* las experiencias que están teniendo *ahora*, esto es, cuando dan (si se me permite) “un salto de tigre al futuro” desde un presente que perciben como históricamente decisivo. Por tanto, si un grupo dado está buscando precedentes pero, al mismo tiempo, trata de sentar los suyos propios cambiando las cosas, la percepción del tiempo resultante contendrá una combinación de elementos lineales y cíclicos.

Los efectos y reacciones que produce la “historización del tiempo presente” en una comunidad incluyen: la voluntad de recoger y preservar cualquier material susceptible de convertirse en una futura fuente para estudiar el período actual; especulaciones relacionadas con la idea de posteridad o con proyecciones como “¿qué se dirá más adelante de lo que está sucediendo ahora?”, a fin de emplearlas como un criterio adicional en la toma de decisiones; por último, las sensaciones de esperanza, poder y responsabilidad (más habituales), o bien de desesperación e impotencia si una comunidad llega a la conclusión de que no puede cambiar nada y se siente aplastada por el peso de una historia “ingobernable”.

Los objetivos que se fijaron los opositores en los años setenta y ochenta hicieron que éstos volviesen la cabeza hacia el pasado en busca de inspiración. Por otro lado, el deseo de muchos *inteligenci* de saber más (y, por tanto, de permitir a otros saber más) sobre las históricas luchas y fracasos nacionales que el régimen comunista polaco despreciaba, manipulaba o silenciaba les hizo adquirir un compromiso más activo en la oposición, tejiendo nexos de significado más fuertes entre pasado y presente. Al reflexionar sobre acontecimientos pasados dentro estos movimientos, la conciencia histórica se recuperó, desarrolló y consolidó entre ellos.

Fue en ese momento cuando los intelectuales polacos de la oposición comenzaron a “historizar” el tiempo presente, es decir, a insertar el presente en un discurso histórico o, mejor dicho, a escribir un discurso histórico sobre el presente, como si estuviesen pensando un poco más allá de su tiempo y concibiesen el “presente” ya como un “pasado”. Un pasado que protagonizaban, que querían registrar y que pretendían contar. Muchos *inteligenci* creían que lo que estaba sucediendo en Polonia con los movimientos opositores desde 1976 iba a ser crucial no sólo para la historia del país, sino posiblemente para todo el Bloque comunista, especialmente desde la formación de Solidaridad. Estaban convencidos de estar escribiendo algunas de las páginas de los libros de texto y manuales de historia del futuro y de que, por tanto, tenían el poder no sólo de decidir cómo sería esa historia (en función de su actuación) sino también de decidir cómo sería contada, qué incluiría y qué no, qué fuentes potenciales debían conservarse y cuáles no, etc. En este sentido, estaban escribiendo su propia historia por adelantado, o preparando los materiales necesarios para que ésta se escribiese de la forma en que ellos la habían percibido.

Nos acercaremos a este fenómeno a través de algunas de las reuniones de la Comisión Nacional de Solidaridad en 1980-1981, de las obras sobre la historia de los movimientos opositores polacos y del caso de *Archiwum “Solidarność”*.

¹⁹⁰ BERKHOFER, Jr., Robert F.: *Beyond the Great Story. History as Text and Discourse*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998 (1995), XI.

Fuentes

Las fuentes estudiadas en esta tesis doctoral forman parte del discurso público de los *inteligenci* opositores polacos, es decir, de las expresiones públicas de estos grupos sociales en concreto y de los medios de comunicación que les respaldaban. Técnicamente, cualquier discurso podría considerarse “público”, pues siempre hay un interlocutor, real o imaginario, hacia el cual se articula. No existe, por el contrario, la categoría de “discurso privado”. Sin embargo, los discursos públicos, en contraste con los que empleamos cotidianamente, implican una mayor ritualización y unas normas de comportamiento más estrictas, y pueden apreciarse diferencias notables entre ellos en el vocabulario, las expresiones, los tipos de argumentación y el estilo del lenguaje. También en los fines, pues el discurso público aspira a una difusión amplia, más allá de las personas presentes en el momento de su transmisión, y viene marcado por una “agenda” de cuestiones de actualidad que interesa tratar y debatir en foros públicos¹⁹¹.

En esta investigación hemos trabajado fundamentalmente con los textos que la *inteligencja* opositora escribió y publicó bajo diversas formas entre 1976 y 1991, principalmente ensayos o artículos, pero también cartas abiertas, manifiestos, introducciones a colecciones y trabajos, entrevistas, o, esporádicamente, poemas y canciones de temática opositora. Dentro del capítulo dedicado a la autopercepción de la oposición y su conciencia histórica serán estudiadas, además, algunas transcripciones de las reuniones de la Comisión Nacional de Solidarność y de ciertos procesos judiciales, que también fueron publicadas en su mayor parte. Por tanto, los diarios, memorias, obras literarias y artículos con fines netamente informativos han quedado (por lo general) excluidos de nuestro espectro de análisis.

Dentro del léxico polaco existen varios términos de uso común que definen los tipos de textos a los que nos aproximaremos: los *popularno-naukowy* y *naukowy* son, respectivamente, obras de divulgación y textos académicos al uso (fruto de una investigación previa, con su correspondiente aparato crítico), mientras que la *publicystyka* abarca los debates o discusiones sobre temas de actualidad que tienen lugar en el espacio público, especialmente a través de los medios de comunicación escritos. Dentro de la prensa, la *publicystyka* suele adoptar la forma de *felietony*, es decir, de columnas o secciones de opinión, muchas veces fijas, de un autor, escritor o periodista¹⁹². Todos estos tipos de ensayo, mejor definidos en la esfera de publicación habitual (controlada por el gobierno comunista polaco), tenían, en cambio, contornos menos precisos dentro del ámbito de las publicaciones clandestinas, no censuradas (*drugi obieg*), debido tanto a las limitaciones técnicas y materiales como a la mayor urgencia informativa propias de esta esfera¹⁹³.

Al margen de estas especificaciones genéricas, nuestro criterio de selección ha sido primordialmente temático. En primer lugar, hemos escogido aquellos textos en los que se muestra un interés destacado por el pasado y por la historia polaca, bien porque se trate de obras de investigación o divulgación sobre ésta, bien porque sean escritos dedicados a asuntos políticos del presente que contienen alusiones o referencias históricas. En segundo lugar, nos hemos centrado específicamente en los discursos que

¹⁹¹ BERNAS, Arkadiusz: *Symbolic Aspects of Political Discourse in Hungary and Poland after '89* (MA Thesis), Budapest, Central European University, 1998, 20-21, que lo extrae de CZYZEWSKI, Marek, KOWALSKI, Sergiusz y PIOTRKOWSKI, Andrzej (ed.): *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, Kraków, Aureus, 1997.

¹⁹² Algunas definiciones de *publicystyka* y *felieton* en los diccionarios online Wielki Słownik Języka Polskiego, Słownik Języka Polskiego Wydawnictwo Naukowy PWN y Słownik Języka Polskiego: <http://www.wsjp.pl/>; <http://sjp.pwn.pl/> y <http://sjp.pl>, respectivamente.

¹⁹³ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 24-25.

giran en torno a las siguientes cuestiones: a la identidad de Polonia en general y su aproximación a otros países europeos; al rol de los *inteligenci* en la historia de Polonia y en el presente, y, por último, a la percepción del paso del tiempo. Dado que en la Polonia comunista la reflexión histórica trascendía con creces tanto la esfera estrictamente académica como el límite entre publicaciones censuradas y no censuradas, no nos hemos restringido a la autoría de historiadores profesionales ni tampoco exclusivamente al ámbito clandestino de libre expresión.

También nos ha parecido oportuno detenernos a analizar una selección de fuentes iconográficas como forma de complementar y apuntalar lo visto en los textos, porque los movimientos de oposición en Polonia contaron con un caudal simbólico muy potente¹⁹⁴ que quedó plasmado en carteles, posters, sellos o tarjetas, y vale la pena poner en relación unas formas de expresión con otras cuando los discursos son compartidos.

Drugi obieg

Muchos han sido los nombres que se le han dado en Polonia al material que circulaba más allá del control estatal: literatura prohibida (*literatura zakazana*), clandestina (*tajna, zakonspirowana*) o “subterránea” (*podziemna*), más allá de la censura (*pozacenzuralna*), ilegal (*nielegalna*), extraoficial (*nieoficjalna*), independiente (*niezależna*) o, enlazando con tradiciones pretéritas, *bibuła*. Otros, más ortodoxos, prefieren emplear el adjetivo *bezdebitowa*, que hace referencia a las editoriales extranjeras y de la emigración polaca que carecían del derecho de difusión de sus publicaciones en Polonia¹⁹⁵, pues casi desde el comienzo del período comunista, antes de que florecieran y se multiplicaran las iniciativas editoriales clandestinas autóctonas (años 70 y 80), existía un contrabando de libros y revistas que venían de fuera¹⁹⁶.

Sin embargo, quizás la expresión más utilizada a día de hoy sea la de *drugi obieg*, que significa “segunda circulación”. Aunque hacia mediados de los años 70 ya se planteaba, por ejemplo, la creación de “otro” teatro, “otra” literatura u “otro” lenguaje (*drugie teatr, literatura, język*)¹⁹⁷, distintos de los oficiales, realmente el término *drugi obieg* se gestó durante la década de los 80 en círculos pro-gubernamentales para referirse despectivamente a la oposición después de la formación de *Solidarność*, además de al mercado negro y lo ilegal en general, pero los opositores también empezaron a usarlo y se popularizó¹⁹⁸. Por contraste, lo legal o autorizado (muchas veces previa censura) sería *pierwszy obieg*, “primera circulación”.

Drugi obieg fue un sistema alternativo de comunicación resultado del desarrollo de actividades contraculturales en la PRL; se oponía, por tanto, al orden y a las normas existentes con el fin de sustituirlas o contrarrestarlas con unos objetivos, valores y principios diferentes. Esta definición no sólo comprende los contenidos de las obras que se distribuían, sino todo el proceso de elaboración y publicación de textos, además de otras manifestaciones y actividades alternativas (como reuniones, charlas y seminarios), registradas a menudo en distintos soportes (cintas magnetofónicas, videos, posters...). Por último, *drugi obieg* también puede entenderse, desde el punto de vista de los que

¹⁹⁴ Kubik: *The Power of Symbols...*, esp. cap. 7.

¹⁹⁵ Definiciones de *debit* igualmente en: <http://sjp.pwn.pl/> y <http://sjp.pl>.

¹⁹⁶ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 13-14 y 75.

¹⁹⁷ En polaco, la palabra “drugi” (segundo) también se emplea con el sentido de “otro”. Por ejemplo, cruzar al otro lado de la calle se diría *Przejsć na drugą stronę ulicy*.

¹⁹⁸ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 13; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 15-17.

participaron en él, como todo un estilo de vida más allá del control y las reglas estatales, un espacio propio y de encuentro¹⁹⁹.

Las editoriales *drugi obieg* solían formar parte o colaborar con algunos grupos opositores y, al no tener un *status* legal, no sólo no recibían apoyo y ayudas de instituciones oficiales, sino que debían distribuir sus obras no censuradas al margen de la red de puntos de venta habituales²⁰⁰. Hasta 1976, estas iniciativas clandestinas fueron bastante esporádicas, si se exceptúan algunos precedentes destacados (publicaciones periódicas de excombatientes entre 1944-1947, textos después de la purga de marzo del 68 o iniciativas de los comités de huelga de 1970), pero a partir de la formación del KOR comenzaron a florecer en torno a distintos movimientos críticos²⁰¹.

No obstante, no todos los textos o editoriales *drugi obieg* tenían necesariamente fines opositores. Algunos autores prefieren, de hecho, hablar de dos *drugie obiegi*: el primero habría sido fruto de la reacción de la oposición contra las políticas culturales del gobierno y facilitaba a los lectores el acceso a posturas y criterios políticos no tolerados por la censura, fomentando la creación de opinión, mientras que el segundo, aunque numéricamente menos significativo, abarcaría otras temáticas (religiosas, visionarias...), a veces incluso argumentos contrarios a los predominantes en la oposición (opciones de lucha armada, pervivencia del antisemitismo...), y supeditaría los criterios intelectuales y políticos a la obtención de los máximos beneficios posibles²⁰².

Por supuesto, los editores *drugi obieg* vinculados a la oposición también tenían en mente consideraciones comerciales y económicas, que frecuentemente venían determinadas, como en cualquier negocio editorial, por la actualidad nacional o internacional y el interés por ciertos asuntos o personas: se reimprimieron, por ejemplo, muchas obras de Czesław Miłosz después de que éste recibiese el Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1980, y se re-editaron las homilías del papa Juan Pablo II antes y después de sus visitas a Polonia, así como las del sacerdote Jerzy Popiełuszko, estrechamente vinculado a *Solidarność*, después de su asesinato en 1984... Y, desde luego, despertaban mucha curiosidad los propios movimientos de oposición, sus líderes y sus ideas, siendo una tendencia en sí mismos²⁰³.

El tono político de las obras *drugi obieg*, pese a la ausencia de censura, casi nunca era tan diáfano y directo como al que estamos acostumbrados en las sociedades democráticas. Se trataba, en palabras de Paweł Sowiński, de expresar lo político en un lenguaje no político. Se criticaba algún aspecto del sistema o al sistema en general desde posturas antitotalitarias, pero a través de recursos y géneros literarios, o bien entretejiendo los argumentos con reflexiones y ejemplos históricos, que estudiaremos en este trabajo. Rara vez se decía abiertamente que era necesario salir de la esfera de influencia de la URSS, ni se animaba a los lectores a protestar en la calle o a organizar huelgas y partidos políticos. Tampoco los estatutos, programas y manifiestos abiertamente políticos abundaban en la “segunda circulación”²⁰⁴. Este carácter sutil del contenido político en un ámbito de libre expresión podría percibirse como una forma de

¹⁹⁹ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 11-12; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 15; Szwajcer: “Opposition Against Society...”, 224-229.

²⁰⁰ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 15.

²⁰¹ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 8, y Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 76-77.

²⁰² Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 12-13; SIEKIERSKI, Stanisław: “Drugi obieg. Uwagi o przyczynach powstania i społecznych funkcjach”, en KOSTECKI, Janusz y BRODZKA, Alina (pod red.): *Piśmiennictwo - systemy kontroli - obiegi alternatywne*, vol. 2, Warszawa, Biblioteka Narodowa, 1992, 286; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 262.

²⁰³ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 42.

²⁰⁴ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 41.

prudencia y autocontención o, si se prefiere, de autocensura por parte de muchos opositores, pero también debe tenerse en cuenta que, en aquellos momentos, el desmantelamiento del Bloque del Este y la desintegración de la Unión Soviética eran escenarios que la mayoría de la población polaca ni siquiera contemplaba como posibles o viables, menos aún a tan corto plazo. Además, la noción de “política”, monopolizada y pervertida tras 30 años de gobierno comunista, arrastraba consigo connotaciones negativas de las que muchos grupos opositores querían disociarse, prefiriendo centrar sus esfuerzos en lo “social” y lo “ciudadano”, es decir, en crear desde la base una sociedad más libre e independiente.

Aún así, la finalidad del *drugi obieg* fue objeto habitual de discusión en el seno de los propios círculos editoriales clandestinos, pues mientras algunos de sus integrantes lo contemplaban, desde un ángulo más cultural, como un mundo de pensamiento libre para grupos reducidos y un valor en sí mismo, otros, sin embargo, querían darle un giro más político, centrado en la lucha contra el comunismo y en minar el sistema con publicaciones patrióticas, propagandísticas o didácticas²⁰⁵.

Por otra parte, más allá de su lectura e interpretación potenciales, el mero hecho de comprar o poseer una publicación *drugi obieg* era, para muchas personas disconformes con el régimen comunista, un signo de identidad y una manifestación política, además de la llave de acceso al mundo de la oposición. Como en cualquier mercado, convencional o alternativo, la calidad material e intelectual de las obras podía llegar a ser muy dispar, sólo que, en el caso de las *drugi obieg*, su valor principal y su credibilidad radicaban en su carácter ilegal²⁰⁶.

El sistema *drugi obieg* no se encuentra en el origen del descontento y la crítica sociales en Polonia, pero una vez en marcha actuó como un catalizador, enriqueciéndolos, difundiéndolos, complementándolos, fortaleciéndolos y ofreciendo, a su vez, inspiración, apoyo y consuelo a muchos²⁰⁷. Su relación interdependiente con el entramado opositor (con distintos grados de autonomía y disensión en cada caso) no se limitaba sólo a los libros y revistas que producía, sino que se extendía a otro tipo de actividades clandestinas, como la impresión de pasquines para actos de sabotaje o la falsificación de documentos para ocultar a personas en busca y captura. Además, las editoriales independientes más importantes establecieron canales para hacer llegar material de imprenta a Polonia desde Occidente²⁰⁸.

La “segunda circulación” proporcionó también un medio de vida a escritores y periodistas, principalmente jóvenes o menos conocidos, que habían sido vetados o despedidos de los medios de comunicación *pierwszy obieg*. Para ellos, su actividad laboral era lo cotidiano, pero también algo que les separaba y distinguía del resto de la sociedad. Los lazos sociales y contactos entre los miembros de este entramado eran fluidos, muchas veces circunstanciales, y no siempre era sencillo discernir a los trabajadores de una editorial de aquellos que sólo eran colaboradores. Por motivos de seguridad, las actividades solían desarrollarse en un ámbito privado, más informal, y el sistema de comunicación más eficiente y discreto entre sus participantes y lectores era el “boca a boca”. Sin embargo, también se aprovechaban las ventajas y recursos de las instituciones estatales, como las universidades, gracias a aquellos miembros del sistema

²⁰⁵ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 42; MIELCZAREK, Adam y DOMAŃSKA, Aleksandra *et al.*: *Śpiący rycerze: szeregowi działacze warszawskiego podziemia wydawniczego lat osiemdziesiątych*, Warszawa, Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa, 2006, 54-56.

²⁰⁶ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 272 y 276.

²⁰⁷ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 269-270.

²⁰⁸ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 50, y en general 49-52.

independiente empleados en la esfera oficial, creando “islas” extraoficiales en su seno²⁰⁹.

Entre las casas editoriales *drugi obieg* anteriores a la fundación de *Solidarność* destacaron Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza (NOWa, antes llamada Nieocenzurowana Oficyna Wydawnicza, la más grande y de mayor éxito en Polonia, con muchos contactos con Occidente y los emigrantes opositores), Głos o Krąg (escisión de Głos), todas próximas al KOR, Wydawnictwo 3 Maja y Wydawnictwo Polski, vinculadas al Movimiento de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos y Ciudadanos (Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela, ROPCiO).

En cuanto a las publicaciones periódicas, *Komunikat* y *Biuletyn Informacyjny* fueron, respectivamente, el órgano oficial y extraoficial del KOR; muchos colaboradores de la revista *U Progu*, fundada en 1976, contribuyeron a la formación del ROPCiO, cuyo altavoz, acto seguido, pasó a ser *Opinia*; el Comité de Resistencia Social (Komitet Oporu Społecznego), por su parte, distribuía cada 2 semanas la revista *KOS* y estaba al cargo de los Cuadernos de Educación Nacional (*Zeszyty Edukacji Narodowej*, ZEN). En octubre de 1977 se creó la revista para jóvenes católicos *Spotkania*, y también *Puls*, cuyo comité editorial estaba formado por miembros del KOR de la ciudad de Łódź. Por otra parte, *Krytyka*, con un nivel académico y teórico elevado, empezó a circular en el verano de 1978 respaldada por algunos integrantes del KOR y opositores checoslovacos y húngaros, mientras que entre 1979 y 1980 aparecieron dos revistas intelectuales con una visión más conservadora, *Res Publica* y *Alternatywy*. Había publicaciones de índole informativa, como *Przegląd* o el ya mencionado *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, que transcribían y traducían noticias extraídas de la prensa internacional, o *Robotnik*, también conectada al KOR y pensada para los trabajadores urbanos, y otras que, como *Zapis*, se dedicaban a publicar íntegramente obras literarias que estaban o eran susceptibles de ser censuradas²¹⁰. En muchos otros casos, las revistas y editoriales se dedicaban, más que a recopilar material original para publicar, a copiar y reproducir textos de interés para los lectores, total o parcialmente, con o sin permiso, de ahí la coletilla habitual “bez zgody i wiedzy autora” (sin conocimiento ni permiso del autor): re-ediciones de obras clásicas, publicaciones de otras épocas, que tuvieron poca difusión o son difíciles de encontrar, escritas en otros países del Bloque u Occidente, transcripciones de locuciones de Radio Europa Libre²¹¹, etc.²¹²

Durante el período de existencia legal de *Solidarność* (agosto 1980-diciembre 1981), aprovechando la coyuntura de mayor libertad, continuaron apareciendo nuevas publicaciones y editoriales *drugi obieg*²¹³, dando un salto cualitativo en su organización

²⁰⁹ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 61-74 y 131-132.

²¹⁰ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 41, 48-49, 56-57; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 102-108, 148-150.

²¹¹ Tanto Radio Europa Libre (Radio Free Europe, RFE) como Radio Libertad (Radio Liberty) se fundaron en los albores de la Guerra Fría en Estados Unidos, con apoyo y financiación gubernamentales. Su objetivo era ser el altavoz de los exiliados políticos de Europa Oriental y difundir información y contenidos no censurados a los habitantes de los países satélite y de la propia Unión Soviética, respectivamente. Véanse, por ejemplo: PUDDINGTON, Arch: *Broadcasting Freedom. The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 2000 y MACHCEWICZ, Paweł: “*Monachijska menażeria*”. *Walka z Radiem Wolna Europa, 1950-1989*, Warszawa, ISP PAN & IPN, 2007. Y el Capítulo 4 para los orígenes de los Open Society Archives (OSA) de Budapest, cuyos fondos se han empleado para esta investigación. Agradezco mucho la ayuda que me brindó el personal de los archivos, sobre todo Robert Parnica y Piotr Wciślik.

²¹² Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 53-55.

²¹³ Si bien no todos los investigadores están de acuerdo con que se pueda denominar *drugi obieg* a las iniciativas que funcionaron (a veces exclusivamente) en el momento que éste y otros movimientos eran legales, y antes de la aprobación de la ley de control de publicaciones de 1981. Mikołajczyk: *Jak się*

y dinámica gracias a la compartimentación regional y sectorial del sindicato libre y al apoyo masivo que éste obtuvo entre los trabajadores y el resto de ciudadanos. La primera publicación periódica de cobertura nacional, independiente y legal (por tanto sujeta a la censura) que tuvo *Solidarność* fue el semanario *Tygodnik Solidarność*, que se publicó entre el 3 de abril y el 11 de diciembre de 1981²¹⁴, pero otras publicaciones mostraron su simpatía hacia el movimiento y colaboraron desde el ámbito *drugi obieg* sin necesidad de estar subordinadas a él. Al establecerse la Ley Marcial, el 13 de diciembre de 1981, muchas de estas publicaciones fueron requisadas y se dismantelaron numerosas casas editoriales, arrestando y encarcelando a buena parte de sus miembros. La propia *Solidarność*, más desmembrada y dispersa a causa de la represión, no siempre era capaz de mantener el contacto entre sus órganos centrales y regionales, y se plantearon distintos conflictos y separaciones que contribuyeron a fragmentar, a su vez, las iniciativas editoriales que, en consecuencia, no dejaron de incrementar en número. Además, al crearse el Fondo de Editoriales Independientes (Fundusz Wydawnictw Niezależnych), aumentó la separación y la sensación de autonomía de las editoriales *drugi obieg* con respecto al sindicato²¹⁵. Desde principios de 1982, el órgano de comunicación principal *drugi obieg* más popular de *Solidarność* a nivel nacional fue el semanario *Tygodnik Mazowsze*.

Los límites de este trabajo no nos permiten profundizar más en la complejidad, funcionamiento y ramificaciones de estas y otras muchas iniciativas *drugi obieg*, más o menos modestas, estables o efímeras, pero nos remitimos a aquellas investigaciones que, desde distintos enfoques, se han aproximado al fenómeno con más detalle²¹⁶.

Permeabilidad entre pierwszy obieg y drugi obieg

Lejos de ser antagónicas, la “primera” y la “segunda circulación” mantenían una relación bastante estrecha en Polonia. Debe tenerse en cuenta que un campo alternativo sólo prospera cuando existe otro oficial al que dar la réplica; por tanto, aunque las publicaciones *drugi obieg* fueron fruto de la ausencia de libertad de expresión en ese contexto, existía cierta reciprocidad y permeabilidad entre éstas y las del *pierwszy*, a las que nunca aspiraron a sustituir, sino más bien a mejorar y complementar. De acuerdo con la filosofía de los promotores de la “segunda circulación”, ésta sólo existiría hasta que pudiera volverse a publicar libremente, sin censura ni controles, momento en el que volvería a haber un único *obieg* con cabida para todos²¹⁷.

Era habitual que los simpatizantes o miembros de la oposición dedicados a la escritura, la investigación o al periodismo recurriesen a ambas vías para tratar de vivir de sus obras, sobre todo si trabajaban en alguna institución pública, como las universidades o la Academia Polaca de Ciencias (Polska Akademia Nauk, PAN). Muchos intentaban publicar primero su trabajo en *pierwszy obieg*, y cuando no lo lograban o se lo censuraban probaban en el *drugi*. Algunos simultaneaban empleos en uno y otro ámbito, incluso habiendo sido despedidos de publicaciones periódicas

pisato..., 16, esp. nota al pie 27; ŁABĘDŹ, Krzysztof: *Wydawnictwa historyczne drugiego obiegu w Polsce. Materiały do bibliografii adnotowanej za lata 1980-1987*, Warszawa, Centralny Ośrodek Metodyczny, Studiów Nauk Politycznych, 1989, 6.

²¹⁴ Volvió a publicarse después de 1989, y hasta hoy en día: <http://www.tygodniksolidarnosc.com/>

²¹⁵ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 44-46; Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 18.

²¹⁶ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*; BŁAŻEJOWSKA, Justyna: *Papierowa rewolucja. Z dziejów drugiego obiegu wydawniczego w Polsce 1976-1989/1990*, Warszawa, IPN, 2010; una crítica de esta última investigación en SKÓRZYŃSKI, Jan: “Karykatura drugiego obiegu”, *Wolność i Solidarność. Studia z dziejów opozycji wobec komunizmu i dyktatury*, 1, 2010, 206-210.

²¹⁷ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 16, 39, 74.

censuradas (como Dariusz Fikus, Jacek Maziarski o Stefan Bratkowski), pues preferían seguir teniendo unos ingresos seguros y regulares procedentes del *pierwszy obieg* aunque fuera escribiendo en una revista para ciegos, horóscopos, secciones de noticias regionales o novela negra por entregas. En función de las circunstancias personales, el tipo de texto a publicar o las convicciones políticas, el salto podía darse del *pierwszy* al *drugi obieg*, o a la inversa.

El gobierno polaco ejercía un mecenazgo cultural muy fuerte y se valía de la dependencia de los autores para lograr sus fines; además de criticar y desprestigiar a los integrantes del *drugi obieg* tachándoles de anti-comunistas, colaboradores de agentes extranjeros o literatos frustrados, en ocasiones permitía el “retorno” de algunos escritores a la esfera oficial a condición de que no volviesen a publicar clandestinamente, o trataba de atraer a su terreno a aquellos del *drugi obieg* que tenían talento. En cambio, los opositores más jóvenes, señalados por las autoridades comunistas desde el comienzo de su implicación política (sobre todo los estudiantes represaliados en marzo de 1968, como Adam Michnik), no tenían opción, y se volcaban exclusivamente en la esfera alternativa para manifestar su opinión, en especial a través de las revistas y periódicos²¹⁸.

Pese a tener el denominador común de la supervisión del censor, no debe olvidarse que en el *pierwszy obieg* existía una amplia variedad de editoriales y publicaciones periódicas, con lo que escribir de forma legal no implicaba necesariamente adhesión ideológica o apoyo al régimen. No significaba lo mismo, por ejemplo, publicar un trabajo en una revista especializada en literatura que en un órgano de propaganda de la PRL, como fueron *Żołnierz Wolności* (“El soldado de la libertad”) y *Trybuna Ludu* (“La tribuna del pueblo”)²¹⁹. Dentro de la propia prensa de orientación comunista también había líneas editoriales más pro-gubernamentales y otras menos ortodoxas o más proclives a la crítica. Además, hubo varias publicaciones periódicas promovidas por grupos católicos críticos con el régimen; éstas permitían una mayor libertad de expresión en sus páginas y ejercieron de contrapeso a lo estrictamente oficial dentro de los límites del sistema, convirtiéndose en un “refugio” para muchos profesionales vetados, desarraigados o desencantados²²⁰. Tal es el caso de *Tygodnik Powszechny*²²¹, en funcionamiento desde 1945, con el carismático Jerzy Turowicz a la cabeza hasta 1999; el también cracoviano *Znak* (desde 1946, con una interrupción entre 1953 y 1956); o *Więź* (desde 1958), ligada al Club de *Inteligencja* Católica (KIK) de Varsovia y con Tadeusz Mazowiecki como redactor-jefe hasta 1981. Los integrantes del movimiento “Znak”, fundado en 1957 como grupo parlamentario católico alternativo, procedían de estos tres entornos, lo que pone de relieve, una vez más, la proximidad entre la oposición y la lucha por la libre expresión en los medios de comunicación escritos.

Por otro lado, las ideas, la actualidad, las tendencias y las demandas de los lectores en muchas ocasiones no entendían de barreras entre lo legal y lo ilegal, pues cualquier casa editorial se hacía eco de ellas, si bien con enfoques y limitaciones propios de cada ámbito. Por ejemplo, durante los años 60 y 70 estuvo muy de moda escribir diarios y memorias, pero mientras que en el *pierwszy obieg* se organizaban concursos de escritura de diarios dirigidos a los lectores de determinados sectores

²¹⁸ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 23, 71-72, 134, 135 –nota al pie 48- y 136, 141, 143-147, 153-154.

²¹⁹ Respectivamente, los periódicos diarios oficiales del Ejército y del Comité Central del Partido Comunista Polaco.

²²⁰ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 18 y 131.

²²¹ Definido por Stefan Kisielewski, columnista asiduo del semanario desde su fundación, como un “oasis de normalidad en la surrealista PRL”. Kisielewski: *Testament Kisiela...*, 99, conversación del 27-I-1991, traducc. propia.

profesionales o centrados en temas concretos (como la familia o el trabajo)²²², en *drugi obieg* circulaban diarios y memorias de víctimas anónimas de la represión comunista, de judíos polacos, de deportados a Siberia, de participantes en el Levantamiento de Varsovia y miembros del Ejército Nacional (Armia Krajowa, AK), de los líderes políticos del gobierno polaco en el exilio²²³ y, por supuesto, de opositores como el escritor Kazimierz Brandys (*Miesiąc*, titulado en su traducción inglesa *A Warsaw Diary*) o de Tadeusz Mazowiecki durante su estancia en la cárcel (*Internowanie*, 1982). La novela también era un género habitual y muy versátil a la hora de esquivar la censura en el *pierwszy obieg*; según Anna R. Dadlez, durante la época de la PRL fueron un canal recurrente para tratar cuestiones políticas y sociales, expresar disconformidad y plasmar críticas, y subyace en ellas un *continuum* de búsqueda de libertad, con distintas formas y contenidos en función del período²²⁴.

Las cuestiones históricas, como ya hemos señalado antes, siempre han estado muy presentes en una y otra esfera, bajo la forma tanto de obras académicas como de *publicystyka*, aunque la historia polaca del siglo XX fue un dominio casi exclusivo de los autores y las editoriales *drugi obieg* hasta la segunda mitad de la década de los ochenta debido a los criterios censores.

Tampoco era extraño que los sistemas de publicaciones legal e ilegal compartieran un porcentaje significativo de lectores. Tanto en uno como en otro caso, el público lector estaba formado fundamentalmente por los círculos intelectuales de las ciudades (estudiantes, científicos, literatos, periodistas...) y, en menor medida, por obreros. Los aficionados a lecturas *drugi obieg* solían ser miembros o simpatizantes de los movimientos opositores, además del propio servicio de inteligencia y policía secreta (la SB), que las interceptaba y estudiaba minuciosamente (no sólo por obligación, sino a veces hasta con devoción); pero no todos los que tenían oportunidad de leer una obra clandestina percibían su acción como un acto de desconfianza hacia el gobierno comunista²²⁵. Por lo demás, el *drugi obieg* no era ni quería ser puramente endogámico: sus propios integrantes, autores y trabajadores de las editoriales, estaban pendientes de las novedades del mercado legal y eran clientela habitual. Cuando encontraban obras interesantes publicadas en *pierwszy obieg*, no tenían reparo en hacerlo saber; de hecho, existen algunos catálogos *drugi obieg* dedicados a fomentar un conocimiento y educación independientes en los que se recomiendan y comentan indistintamente obras legales y clandestinas²²⁶.

Samizdat y tamizdat

Dos conceptos que, si bien no son de origen polaco, están muy relacionados con las publicaciones independientes en Polonia son *samizdat* y *tamizdat*.

El término *samizdat* fue acuñado, al parecer, por un poeta moscovita a finales de los años 50 para definir una colección de poemas que había editado él mismo. Poco

²²² Véase, por ejemplo, LANDAU-CZAJKA, Anna: "Wartości i aspiracje inteligencji czasów stabilizacji. Czasy Gomułki i Gierka", en Domański (pod red.): *Inteligencja w Polsce...*, esp. 183.

²²³ JEZIORAŃSKI, Zdzisław [pseud. Jan NOWAK]: *Wojna w eterze. Wspomnienia. Tom I: 1948-1956*, Warszawa, Krąg, 1985, y *Tom II: 1956-1976*, Warszawa, Krąg, 1989; *Wspomnienia Akowców: Kołyma*, [n.p.], Bellona, 1981; ZAREMBA, Zygmunt: *Powstanie sierpniowe*, [Warszawa], Nadzieja, [1985] (1945); ŻENCZYKOWSKI, Tadeusz: *Samotny bój* Warszawy, Warszawa, Most, 1986. El político socialista Adam Ciołkosz fue un autor especialmente prolífico.

²²⁴ DADLEZ, Anna R.: *Political and Social Issues in Poland as Reflected in the Polish Novel, 1946-1985*, New York, Boulder (East European Monographs), 1989.

²²⁵ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 258-259, 266-267, 272-273.

²²⁶ *Co czytać. Propozycje dla kół samokształceniowych*, Warszawa, WSKos, 1984.

tiempo después, ya se aplicaba en general a la distribución por iniciativa propia de textos (u otros materiales) sin el permiso de las autoridades ni el respaldo de una casa editorial y, por supuesto, sin censurar²²⁷. La palabra que más se le aproximaría en castellano sería “autoedición” o “autopublicación”.

Probablemente sea éste el concepto más empleado a nivel internacional para referirse a las publicaciones clandestinas producidas en los países del Bloque del Este y la Unión Soviética, incluido el *drugi obieg*. Sin embargo, los propios integrantes del sistema independiente en Polonia sólo hablaban de *samizdat* para aludir a textos clandestinos soviéticos, muy rara vez a los propios. Además, con el transcurso de los años las diferencias técnicas, de cantidad y de calidad respecto de otros países del entorno se acrecentaron²²⁸. Tradicionalmente, el *samizdat* soviético o checoslovaco, y también al principio el polaco, consistía en una obra escrita a máquina, encuadernada de manera más o menos rudimentaria (con grapas, cosida, con unos cartones como tapas...), que podía reproducirse simultáneamente varias veces gracias al papel-carbón. Al margen de las iniciativas editoriales independientes que fueron surgiendo en cada país, como la máquina de escribir estaba presente en muchos hogares, la decisión de mecanografiar unas cuantas copias de un texto *samizdat* dependía de cada lector, y era probablemente el método más discreto e indetectable de difundir un texto y multiplicar su alcance e impacto entre la población interesada²²⁹. El *samizdat* supuso, por motivos políticos, un retorno a formas de impresión y publicación menos eficientes y, aunque a todas luces es una exageración hablar de una vuelta a la era pre-Gutenberg, resulta interesante que en la URSS se plantearan alternativas tales como la memorización de textos para su transmisión oral²³⁰.

En cambio, como apuntábamos más arriba, la situación inicial y la evolución de las publicaciones clandestinas en Polonia fueron sustancialmente diferentes. Como resultado del cambio de liderazgo en el Partido Comunista y de los préstamos que contrató el Estado con diversos países occidentales, durante la primera mitad de los años 70 Polonia experimentó un desarrollo material notable y la política oficial de publicaciones se hizo más laxa; es decir, se tenía acceso por vía legal a revistas, periódicos y libros, tanto polacos como extranjeros, que no habrían podido ver la luz en otros países del Bloque. Más adelante, cuando proliferaron las publicaciones ilegales, la actitud de las autoridades polacas también resultó ser más permisiva que la de otros estados; se trataba, sin lugar a dudas, de materiales no permitidos, pero no estaban terminantemente prohibidos, ni las actividades clandestinas se perseguían y castigaban con tanta brutalidad e intransigencia como en la Unión Soviética o en los países gobernados por la línea dura del Partido Comunista (RDA y Checoslovaquia). Esta tendencia oficial más aperturista (aún con sus vaivenes), así como la permeabilidad de ideas, temas, autores y lectores entre el *pierwszy* y el *drugi obieg* polacos, fueron algo bastante excepcional en la Europa Central y Oriental de la década de los ochenta, donde la separación entre lo oficial y lo extraoficial era prácticamente insalvable²³¹. Además, en Polonia pronto se introdujo la reproducción de textos con maquinaria propia de una

²²⁷ SKILLING, H. Gordon: *Samizdat and Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, London, Macmillan, 1989, 3-5; Sowiński: *Zakazana księżka...*, 14; KOMAROMI, Ann: “Samizdat and Soviet Dissident Publics”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 71, no. 1, Spring 2012, 70-90, esp. 74. Sobre el tratamiento del *samizdat* como material de archivo antes y ahora: ZASLAVSKAYA, Olga: “From Dispersed to Distributed Archives: The Past and the Present of Samizdat Material”, *Poetics Today*, 29:4, Winter 2008, 669-712.

²²⁸ Sowiński: *Zakazana księżka...*, 76 y 78.

²²⁹ Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 6-13 y 26-32.

²³⁰ Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 4, 10-11.

²³¹ Skilling: *Samizdat...*, IX, 18, 40.

impresión al uso; esta mecanización dio como resultado una sistematización del proceso de producción y una diversificación de editoriales y publicaciones sin parangón, con lo que puede hablarse con propiedad de una *prensa* clandestina. En este sentido, el *drugi obieg* rebasa la definición clásica de *samizdat*, más artesanal y con mayores impedimentos técnicos²³².

De la palabra *samizdat* se derivaron otros vocablos más especializados, como *radizdat* (transcripciones de programas de radio) o *magnizdat* (lo que se grababa en cintas de audio). *Tamizdat*, por otra parte, se utilizó por primera vez en la editorial milanese Feltrinelli Editore con motivo de la publicación en ruso de la obra de Boris Pasternak *Doctor Zhivago*. Aunque significa literalmente “lo publicado allí”, su sentido varía en función del punto de vista del observador, pues puede referirse bien a las obras que los escritores del Bloque publicaban más allá del Telón de Acero, o bien a aquellas otras que llegaban al Bloque desde “fuera”, en ambos casos necesariamente de contrabando. En cualquier caso, su puesta en marcha ha sido vista como una estrategia para superar la división política y económica de Europa a través del pensamiento libre y la cultura, especialmente después de la firma de los acuerdos de Helsinki (1975)²³³.

Al igual que en el siglo XIX los libros polacos “prohibidos” tuvieron su origen en los círculos de emigrantes y exiliados políticos, durante el comunismo la emigración polaca jugó un papel fundamental para la puesta en circulación de ediciones extranjeras en la PRL y, en definitiva, para la creación del sistema *drugi obieg*. Desde el mismo final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, algunas capitales europeas occidentales, especialmente París o Londres, se convirtieron en las sedes de nuevas revistas y editoriales dirigidas por y para ciudadanos polacos, de entre las que destaca, por su influencia y diversificación, Instytut Literacki, liderada por Jerzy Giedroyc, pero también Odnova, Éditions Spotkania, Polonia, Polonia Book Fund, Wydawnictwo Aneks o Puls²³⁴.

El sistema *tamizdat*, por tanto, estuvo en funcionamiento en la PRL mucho antes que el *samizdat*, sobre todo a partir de la muerte de Stalin y la crisis de 1956, que supuso la llegada al poder de Władysław Gomułka. Fue entonces cuando se abrió un efímero paréntesis de mayor libertad y los contactos con Occidente se hicieron más fluidos en todos los niveles, especialmente los académicos, cosa que no sucedió en otros países comunistas. Aprovechando esta coyuntura, y casi en paralelo a Pasternak, algunos autores polacos se animaron a publicar sus obras en las editoriales dirigidas por emigrantes.

Había innumerables métodos para pasar textos de un lado al otro del Telón. En general, las personas libres de sospecha autorizadas a viajar por el extranjero (artistas, diplomáticos, literatos, deportistas, bibliotecarios, miembros del PZPR...) podían ocultar algún texto entre su equipaje o en el compartimento de un medio de transporte (coche, tren, barco...). Los *inteligenci* que se desplazaban a menudo a Europa occidental ejercían en ocasiones de “correo” para otros compañeros: Władysław Bartoszewski, por ejemplo, se encargó de llevar las obras de Stefan Kisielewski cuando éste no podía salir del país. Pero el contrabando no se limitaba a la pequeña escala: muchas publicaciones anglófonas y francófonas llegaban a Polonia gracias a los envíos

²³² Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 21-25; Komaromi: “Samizdat and Soviet...”, 74.

²³³ KIND-KOVÁCS, Friederike: “An ‘Other Europe’ through Literature: Recreating a European literary ‘Kontinent’ in the light of the Helsinki Final Act”, en FARALDO, José M., GULIŃSKA-JURGIEL, Paulina and DOMNITZ, Christian (Hg.): *Europa im Ostblock. Vorstellungen und Diskurse (1945-1991)*, Köln/ Weimar/ Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 2008, 267-299, esp. 268, nota al pie 4; Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 4-6; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 75-86.

²³⁴ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 75-120; Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 8-9, 16 y 21.

que hacían organizaciones internacionales como el International Literary Centre²³⁵ a bibliotecas, universidades y particulares, siempre con otras instituciones y editoriales extranjeras o emigrantes como intermediarios.

En esta época, muchos futuros opositores tuvieron acceso por primera vez a los *tamizdat*, no sólo gracias a sus contactos, sino también a las “grietas” del sistema censor: la propia Biblioteca Nacional de Polonia, por lo visto, conservaba ejemplares y sus empleados permitían leerlos *in situ*. No obstante, ser cogido *in fraganti* con uno o varios *tamizdat* podía suponer ser arrestado y sometido a investigación judicial, con lo que su intercambio y lectura debían tener lugar en entornos lo más seguros posible, normalmente de carácter privado. Por otro lado, como el número de títulos disponibles era bastante reducido, casi todos los aficionados a la literatura clandestina acababan leyendo los mismos libros y revistas, y desarrollaban, por tanto, ciertas ideas e inquietudes comunes, o puntos de vista similares²³⁶.

La nueva ola de emigración que se produjo después de los acontecimientos de marzo de 1968 hizo que una generación más joven, con experiencias distintas, se desplazara a otros puntos de Europa Occidental; el París de Giedroyc y tantos otros emigrantes de la posguerra “compitió” a partir de entonces con nuevas iniciativas desarrolladas en Londres (como Aneks), Suecia, la República Federal Alemana o Italia. Para estas editoriales, la fundación del KOR en 1976 supuso contar con un aliado mejor organizado y estructurado dentro de Polonia que facilitó el paso y la distribución de las obras por el país, creándose incluso algunas bibliotecas de “libros prohibidos”²³⁷.

Desde mediados de los años 70, con el desarrollo sistematizado y mecanizado de la esfera *drugi obieg*, los *tamizdat* empezaron a fluir con más frecuencia de Este a Oeste que de Oeste a Este; gracias a los nexos y estrecha colaboración entre polacos emigrantes y opositores que se quedaron en la PRL, muchas obras publicadas originalmente por una editorial clandestina recibían más difusión fuera que dentro de su propio país, incluso con traducciones a varios idiomas. Además, a partir de la formación de *Solidarność*, el interés que despertaba Polonia en los medios de comunicación internacionales fue aún mayor, y se disparó la demanda occidental de información sobre la oposición y sus líderes.

Las fronteras entre lo producido “dentro” y lo producido “fuera” se hicieron, en esos momentos, más difusas. Tanto si hablamos de *samizdat* en general como de *drugi obieg* polaco en particular, los textos hacían muchas veces uno o varios viajes de ida y vuelta; por ejemplo, siendo publicados primero como *samizdat*, llevados fuera, y retornando al Bloque del Este como *tamizdat* (como sucedía con las revistas *Krytyka*, *Res Publica* o *Zapis*), o bien a la inversa, como si de un *boomerang* se tratase. De este modo, en *drugi obieg* al final se publicaba casi de todo: textos originales, re-ediciones de obras llegadas de fuera (con o sin permiso de la editorial extranjera), o copias de re-ediciones extranjeras de un original *drugi obieg*²³⁸.

En cualquier caso, la importancia de las publicaciones *samizdat* y *tamizdat* radica en que desempeñaron varias funciones: en primer lugar, fueron un medio por el que las personas pudieron mantener su integridad intelectual y alcanzar cierto grado de libertad en condiciones represivas; en segundo lugar, fueron una forma de diálogo silencioso, de carácter político y cultural, entre movimientos e individuos críticos de la Europa

²³⁵ Organización estadounidense encargada de difundir la cultura occidental en Europa Oriental.

²³⁶ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 78-82 y 94-120. La anécdota de Bartoszewski y Kisielewski se recoge en BARTOSZEWSKI, Władysław: *Władysław Bartoszewski. Skąd Pan jest? Wywiad rzeka* (rozmawiał z Michałem Komarem), Warszawa, Świat Książki, 2006, 197-198.

²³⁷ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 87, 89-92.

²³⁸ Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 6; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 93-120, 137-139.

comunista y de otras partes del mundo, que les permitió adquirir un cierto sentido de grupo y les suministró fortaleza moral en momentos complicados (prisión, huidas, amenazas...); en tercer lugar, fueron un canal para expresar la disconformidad de muchos con el sistema comunista y hacer propuestas para construir una sociedad más libre y humana; y, por último, proporcionaron información tanto dentro como fuera del país que ayudó a contrarrestar las campañas de propaganda y desinformación de los propios regímenes comunistas²³⁹.

²³⁹ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 27-28, 81, 139-140; Skilling: *Samizdat...*, 17.

Chapter 1

Through the Looking-Glass and What *Inteligencja* Found There. Polish Opposition Intellectuals' Self-Perception through the Assessment of the Past

Die Vergangenheit führt einen heimlichen Index mit, durch den sie auf die Erlösung verwiesen wird. Streift denn nicht uns selber ein Hauch der Luft, die um die Früheren gewesen ist? ist nicht in Stimmen, denen wir unser Ohr schenken, ein echo von nun verstummen? haben die Frauen, die wir umwerben, nicht Schwestern, die sie nicht mehr gekannt haben? Ist dem so, dann besteht eine geheime Verabredung zwischen den gewesenen Geschlechtern und unserem. Dann sind wir auf der Erde erwartet worden. Dann ist uns wie jedem Geschlecht, das vor uns war, eine *schwache* messianische Kraft mitgegeben, an welche die Vergangenheit Anspruch hat.

Walter Benjamin: "Über den Begriff der Geschichte, These II"

... the past few years in Polish public life have been marked by a renaissance of nonconformist attitudes. Their common denominator lies in the goal of self-determination and the formation of a program for a Polish politics of activism. Reflection on analogous endeavors from some eighty years ago can create an intellectual bridge between the era of our ancestors and now, when it is our turn to strive for independence. All the more so since an important element of the struggle for self-determination lies in an authentic knowledge of our own history. It is necessary to develop one's own approach to the national heritage, to form one's own ideological tradition and place oneself in it. Disputes over history are frequently equivalent to quarrels over our identity.

Adam Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel"

A) *Introductory remarks*

We have already commented in the general Introduction that *inteligencja*, understood as a myth (that is, a cluster of values and behavior patterns), and hence its nature, roles or imminent disappearance, has been an abiding concern in Polish public sphere ever since the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Jolanta Babiuch-Luxmoore, to speak and discuss about it has two possible purposes: firstly, it enables the promoters of such debates to fulfill their need of sharing their view of the world, and thus of expressing their social identity and its alleged origins. Secondly, to use such a polysemous term as *inteligencja* also allows a total or partial re-interpretation of its contents, therefore its adaptation to the present context and its specific demands. To put it another way, the first goal is linked to the continuity of a tradition represented by *inteligencja*, whereas the second has more to do with modifying or even breaking with this tradition. In both cases, the word *inteligencja* acts as a kind of "pretext" to propose a model of group to which a person or persons (most probably *inteligenci* themselves) would like to belong²⁴⁰. Along this chapter we will have the chance to see how these two positions unfold in a complementary way within Polish opposition's narratives.

²⁴⁰ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 131-132, 137-146.

Of course, one must also bear in mind that, in many occasions, oppositionists took the past as a reference in order to avoid censorship, which was generally more focused on controlling clearly present-day topics. This way, a comparison, but also a bridge between past and present was established, and the historical dimension provided a given problem with a more universal and supra-temporal sense²⁴¹.

The resort to a mythic portrait of the *inteligencja* in Polish opposition's texts of the 1970s and 1980s can be regarded as well as a response to what critical intellectuals may have perceived as a threatening situation, that is, to the transformation of values and traditions, and thus of the classic image of the *inteligencja*, that was taking place within Polish society. This is related, of course, to the periodic attempts of the Communist establishment to discredit the "traditional" *inteligencja*, rendering it "obsolete", and to fashion simultaneously a new one "in its image and likeness". The negative descriptions of the "old" *inteligencja*, however, probably contributed to the shaping and better definition of the positive ones.

Besides the critical views about *inteligenci* present in official media since the beginning of PRL times, after Martial Law was applied, criticism concentrated on the role played by the *inteligenci* who were close to *Solidarność*. According to these reports and comments, opposition *inteligencja* had debased itself, betrayed Socialism, forgotten about its proletarian and peasant origins and broken its commitment with the "masses" which had enabled their education or studies. Critical *inteligenci* were called "internal émigrés" (*emigracja wewnętrzna*) and were accused of isolating themselves from society. Their elitism, alienation and lack of rational thought, together with the influence of nineteenth-century liberal values and a "noble-bourgeois" cultural sphere, had the fault of this supposed "deviation" of some intellectuals.

Debates about whether *inteligencja* had a duty to the nation or, rather, to the State also arose then. Those *inteligenci* who inspired themselves in Polish unsubmitive tradition (*niepokorni*) considered that "authentic" intellectuals should remain faithful to national resistance and critical with governmental institutions, plus be solidary with workers and socially disadvantaged groups. They inspired themselves in the past and assumed, to a great extent, the old mythical *inteligiencki* role because they perceived that the main problem for Polish society was their own State, due to its dependence on a foreign power, bad management, abuses and repression. On the other hand, official sources insisted on the need for *inteligencja* to collaborate with the government in a practical way during the increasing economic crisis in the country²⁴².

B) Historical inspiration. Nineteenth and twentieth-century ideas and political ideologies

The sociologist Jerzy Szacki pointed out in 1971 that, by accepting or rejecting a tradition, a group imposes a certain political, philosophical and moral order on the past, appropriating itself of it for a present-day pedagogic use²⁴³. This is one of the key points underlying in many Polish opposition discourses: the search, in Irving Howe's words, of "a usable past"²⁴⁴, and will be approached in detail in the following pages.

²⁴¹ Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 139, 141-142.

²⁴² Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 89-90, 116-119; Sdvizhkov: "The Intelligentsia...", 91.

²⁴³ Szacki: *Tradycja, przegląd...*, 270, quoted in Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 114.

²⁴⁴ HOWE, Irving: "The Polish Resistance", *The New Republic*, October 1986, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Adam Michnik's Boxes) [the magazine cuttings are not paginated]. Also Kopeček: "Human Rights...", 577-578. Howe: "The Polish Resistance",

In her work about *drugi obieg* historical works of the 1970s and 1980s, Magdalena Mikołajczyk remarks that the political and social consciousness of participants in underground publishing houses had been shaped to a great extent by certain traditions, such as opposition and revolt or conspiratorial self-organization, together with doctrinaire and ideological debates passed on from generation to generation²⁴⁵. Similarly, Marcin Meller considered that *Solidarność*'s historical identity was basically created by a recent, revolutionary heritage in combination with a "restoration" one. The first, originated in PRL times, was nourished by the previous workers' protests of 1956, 1970 and 1976, and had among its goals and ideals the achievement of human, labor and citizen rights. The second, dating back to the interwar period (1918-1939), openly called into question Communist government's legitimacy, regarded the Polish Second Republic as its main historical reference and took November 11th (when Poland regained its independence and statehood, in 1918) as a highly symbolic commemorative date²⁴⁶.

However, I would like to nuance these observations by explicitly adding two fundamental traditions: idealism and realism, which acquired a new meaning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and have been discussed and re-interpreted over and over again since then in Polish *inteligencje* circles in general, and very particularly in opposition ones. Usually, idealism is identified with Polish Romanticism (total opposition against partitioning powers, fight for values and ideals, especially for freedom and independence of the country, frequently through conspiracy, armed uprisings or violent outbursts...), whereas realism tends to be on a level with Positivism and *praca organiczna* (organic work), consistent in changing things and aiming for the highest degree of autonomy, or independence, through everyday work, economic and social development, constructive initiatives, etc.²⁴⁷

In our case, the re-evaluation of Romantic and Positivist past contains a main, implicit question concerning the present that each intellectual tries to answer according to his or her convictions: How should *inteligenci* face an adverse, repressive and illegitimate power (Communist State under Soviet supervision), and work in favor of the Polish nation and their own interests? And especially: how could they promote freedom of expression, in order to be able to carry out their job in an honest way and show their dissent? From this starting point, inquiries multiply and branch out: Could more be done *from within* the system, that is, with partial reforms, or resorting to PRL institutions (high schools, universities, the *harcerstwo*²⁴⁸, the press, etc.) and using the system's instruments to transmit their thoughts and values, and make pluralism prosper? Or should they create autonomous organizations, an alternative and more representative system of their own, beyond the official? And should this be done "openly", or made "underground" from the start? Should there be a negotiation with power? And if so, when? And which were its limits? Should there be non-negotiable points? In other

²⁴⁵ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 7.

²⁴⁶ Meller: "Rola myślenia...", 253-254.

²⁴⁷ DAVIES, Norman: *God's Playground. A history of Poland, volume II: 1795 to the present*, Oxford, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1981, 29-58; Davies: *Heart of Europe...*, esp. 158-278; BROMKE, Adam: *Poland's Politics: Idealism vs. Realism*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), Harvard University Press, 1967; KUCZYŃSKI, Janusz: *The Changing Picture of Warsaw Positivism in Polish Historiography, 1918-1989*, Turku, University of Turku, Department of Political History, 2001; WALICKI, Andrzej: *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: the Case of Poland*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982; WIERZBIŃSKI, Andrzej: *Historiografia polska doby romantyzmu*, Wrocław, FUNNA, 1999.

²⁴⁸ The Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego is the Polish branch of the scout movement, founded in 1918. In the PRL period, political authorities changed part of its rules and dismissed many of its instructors to adapt it to the new Communist ideology, but it preserved some of its independence.

words, what could be given up and what never should? For now, we may advance that the re-assessment of these trends of Polish thought took, first and foremost, to the proposal of syntheses and hybrid solutions.

In political myths, besides collective actors, there is also a special place for prominent individuals who are considered heroes or founding fathers²⁴⁹. A society with a complicated past and multiple heritages such as the Polish one is indeed a fertile scenario for this. During the 1970s and 1980s, many in-depth biographies, short sketches and portraits about historical political characters, their thought and the groups they created or co-created, were published both openly and in *drugi obieg*²⁵⁰. The range goes from the leader of the Second Republic Marshall Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), the ideologue of the National-Democratic Party Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) or the Prime Minister in exile during World War II Władysław Sikorski (1881-1943), back to the Medieval Ages' thinkers and law experts approached by Stefan Bratkowski in his *Nasi ojcowie-założyciele* [Our founding fathers], which was confiscated twice by Communist censorship in the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and finally published unabridged in 1985 by underground press.

The texts about idealism and realism we are going to deal with had, among others, two very direct "precedents", chronologically and thematically speaking: Wojciech Karpiński's and Marcin Król's *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku* [Political figures of the nineteenth century] (1974), which consists of a collection of essays by these authors issued previously in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and Bohdan Cywiński's *Rodowody niepokornych* [The origins of the unsubmissive], published in 1971 in *I obieg* after undergoing censorship, but available in full version since 1984 in the underground market.

Bohdan Cywiński (n. 1939), a Catholic oppositionist in PRL times, was since the 1960s an outstanding member of Warsaw's Club of Catholic Intellectuals (Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej, KIK). He began working for the journal *Znak* in 1967, and was its chief editor between 1973 and 1977. From 1978 he took part in the Uniwersytet Latający and Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych initiatives, and in 1980 he became a member of the Experts' Commission of the Gdańsk Shipyards' Strike Committee, as well as of *Solidarność*. He was abroad when Martial Law was established and decided not to return to Poland until 1990. As an émigré, he continued with his opposition activities, collaborated with Radio Free Europe's Polish Section and was lecturer in several European universities.

Rodowody niepokornych contained Cywiński's views about the rebellious, non-conformist and pro-independence traditions of Polish lay *inteligenci* at the turn of the nineteenth century. The author argued that, regarding social issues, these intellectuals followed an ethical radicalism very close to the Gospels. Having found a common ground for believers and non-believers within critical milieus, the book became an inspiration for many oppositionists of the time, like those belonging to the Catholic association *Znak* or KSS "KOR", including Adam Michnik, who wrote his *Kościół, lewica, dialog* (1979)²⁵¹ as a response to it. The work is, as Jolanta Babiuch-Luxmoore remarked, a significant testimony of contemporary Poles' search of a past social ethos which could be recovered or continued to a great extent in (present) circumstances of

²⁴⁹ Ifversen: "Myth in the Writing...", 457.

²⁵⁰ For the latter I recommend to have a look at Łabędź: *Wydawnictwa historyczne...*

²⁵¹ It was translated in French as *L'Église et la gauche*, and in English as *The Church and the Left*, London/ Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993.

crises, revolts and discontent, when moral elections must be made and stances should be taken²⁵².

Wojciech Karpiński (n. 1943) studied Philology and Philosophy at Warsaw University and worked for several cultural magazines in the 1970s. In 1975 he signed Letter 59 (*List 59*) against the changes in Polish Constitution and later on became part of the opposition group Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe (PPN). He was a member of the editorial board of *Res Publica*, an outstanding *drugi obieg* political journal, since its foundation in 1979. When Martial Law was applied, Karpiński went abroad and, after spending some months in the U.S., decided to settle in Paris. He works since 1982 in the still ongoing émigré literary journal *Zeszyty Literackie*, and until 2008 in the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Some of his texts were also published in Jerzy Giedroyc's "Instytut Literacki", probably the most outstanding Polish émigré's publishing house in those years, with close connections with the opposition at home.

On the other hand, Marcin Król (n. 1944), who devoted himself professionally to intellectual history, was one of the authors of March 1968's *Deklaracja ruchu studenckiego* [Declaration of the student movement] and became a member and lecturer of the Society of Scientific Courses (Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych, TKN) in 1978. In 1979 he co-founded the afore-mentioned journal *Res Publica* (*Res Publica Nowa* since 1992) and was its chief editor between 1979-1981 and 1987-1992. The aim of this moderate, liberal-conservative publication during PRL times was to provide Polish intellectuals with information about the new trends in Western political thought. In 1980 Król became counselor of *Solidarność*'s Mazovian Section, and began working for *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1982. He also participated in the 1989 Round Table Talks and in 1990 was part of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's election committee. He is currently professor at Warsaw University²⁵³.

Karpiński's and Król's *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku* is considered one of the bedside books of young Polish oppositionists during the second half of the 1970s²⁵⁴. The profiles and political activities of the historical figures chosen for the volume are very varied: a Romantic leader, like Maurycy Mochnacki, Adam Czartoryski, head of the political émigré faction "Hôtel Lambert" in Paris, and the members of the liberal party of the *Kaliszanie*, who all, regardless of their political differences, took part in the November 1830 Uprising and emigrated afterwards; the philosopher and *publicysta* Henryk Kamieński; count Stanisław Tarnowski, who participated in the January 1863 Uprising and later was MP in the Galician Sejm; the Romantic writers and poets Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Norwid and Zygmunt Krasiński; politicians and other professionals who worked for partitioning powers, or had a more conciliatory, Positivist attitude, like Aleksander Wielopolski, Włodzimierz Spasowicz and Cracow School's historian

²⁵² *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 3; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 107-108; LIPSKI, Jan Józef: *KOR. A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1985 (1983), 76.

²⁵³ Wojciech Karpiński's profile is available in *Zeszyty Literackie*'s and Encyklopedia Solidarności's webpages:

http://zeszytyliterackie.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=563&Itemid=106

http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=Wojciech_Franciszek_Karpi%C5%84ski

(both accessed on June 4th, 2014). Information about Król: *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 3, and also Encyklopedia Solidarności (accessed in June 4th, 2014):

http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=Marcin_Kr%C3%B3l

²⁵⁴ KARPIŃSKI, Wojciech and KRÓL, Marcin: *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku: Maurycy Mochnacki, Kaliszanie, Hotel Lambert, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, Henryk Kamieński, Cyprian Norwid, Zmartwychwstańcy, Aleksander Wielopolski, Julian Klaczko, Stanisław Tarnowski, Włodzimierz Spasowicz, Michał Bobrzyński, Aleksander Świętochowski, Jan Ludwik Popławski*, Kraków, Znak, 1974.

Michał Bobrzyński; influent religious figures such as the *Zmartwychwstancy* fathers Kajsiewicz and Semenenko, etc.

As we have pointed out above, the debates about whether to adopt an idealistic or a realistic position in Polish public affairs are recurrent since mid-nineteenth century. We could say, therefore, that what was being discussed in official, censored and underground press in the 1970s and 1980s is nothing new in this sense. However, the key points and proposals issued from these cyclical discussions have differed according to the context and circumstances. Since 1976, after the mirage of socio-economic improvement had vanished and another workers' protest had been repressed, a different way of opposing Communist regime was being developed and was aiming to join efforts from different spheres of society, especially from Catholic and left-wing *inteligencja*, plus industrial workers. According to the new opposition "strategy", society, or the nation, should be as autonomous and self-organized as possible and put pressure on the government in a peaceful fashion from *beyond* the system. But how could so many different positions and interests be put together? How could this "paradigm", which Maryjane Osa defines as "us vs. them", materialize?²⁵⁵

I support that Polish *inteligenci* contributed to achieve this through the re-interpretation of the idealistic-realistic dilemma, coming up with different balanced or conciliatory formulae. The works of Król, Karpiński and Cywiński can be considered an immediate "prelude" of what came next, due to their attempts either of giving a whole picture of the richness of Polish political and intellectual thought, or of *rapprochement* of lay and Catholic *inteligencje* traditions.

B.1) Romanticism-idealism

One of the basic ideas in Polish Romanticism is that of the independence of nations through a revolutionary process, a feature connected in a certain way with Walter Benjamin's emancipation proposal, as Michael Löwy pictures it:

... Benjamin's reflection allows us to think about a revolutionary project with a calling for general emancipation.

This is the condition in order to face the ethical and political demands of our time and to revive the undoubtedly boundless ambition (but what interest could a restrained, moderate, mediocre utopia have for human action?) of ending with the dominion of one class over other, of one sex over other, of one nation over other, of human beings over nature. It is a universal goal, inspired in the unfulfilled promise of 1789: liberty, equality, fraternity, or, rather, solidarity, because it includes both brothers and sisters.²⁵⁶

There are several myths associated to Poland's nineteenth-century Romanticism that have become part of Polish identity, according to Ewa Domańska: on one hand, Messianic ideas involved regarding Poland as "the Christ of Nations" (Christological myth), as the leader of the Slavic peoples submitted to great European Empires ("for your freedom and ours") and, continuing with the previous Noble-Sarmatian tradition dating back to the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries²⁵⁷, as the "Bulwark of Christendom"

²⁵⁵ OSA, Maryjane: *Solidarity and Contention. Networks of Polish Opposition*, Minneapolis/ London, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 174-184.

²⁵⁶ Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 177, my transl.

²⁵⁷ Sarmatism or Sarmatianism defines the dominant ideology, culture and lifestyle of the nobility (*szlachta*) of the Kingdom of Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Polish nobles believed themselves descendants of the ancient Sarmatians, an Iranian people that flourished from the fifth century BC to the fourth century AD and inhabited the region of

(*Antemurale Christianitatis*). This also included the so-called “myth of the West”, based on the conviction that Western European countries are indebted to Poland due to its “sacrifices” in the name of freedom, and must certainly come to its aid. On the other hand, the Insurrection myth covers the death for Homeland (Tyrtean myth), the image of the “Pole-conspirator” (a martyr, tragic hero or loser), which takes to the cult of insurrection veterans; the figure of the “noble-traitor” and, finally, the “black myth of the West”, that denounces an alarming lack of values and spiritual roots in Western countries. Common to both Messianism and Insurrection myth are the image of the Polish Mother and the idea of mission, which entails suffering, death and sacrifice, but also resurrection²⁵⁸. We will go through the majority of these myths in Polish opposition’s narratives along the next three chapters of our research.

Moving now on to *inteligencja*’s specific views of idealism in our time scope, it is frequent to spot in oppositionists’ texts an identification of Romantic traditions with the core of Polish *ethos*.

Following Andrzej Micewski’s *feliety* in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, idealism would be the spiritual redoubt of the deepest emotions and convictions, as well as of ideas (*inteligencja*’s field of mastery), without which a nation simply cannot survive, as Poland’s complicated past had proven— with ultimate success²⁵⁹. He further exemplified:

Without Romantic tradition one cannot imagine social education, democratic and freedom aspirations, the guarantee of human rights and social justice, a free and many-sided development of culture and of human beings themselves, and neither a nation’s untransferable right to ensure its spiritual identity. It is therefore, from an educational point of view, the most important tradition, transmitting basic values.²⁶⁰

Values which, above all, it is essential never to give up regardless of circumstances and adversities, as Adam Michnik constantly reminded his colleagues, though in a much more universal way than Micewski. Imponderables are, in sum, what gives meaning to a person’s existence:

And so you find yourself engaged in a philosophical debate with them [police officers and secret service agents while in jail after December 13th 1981, C.A.] about the meaning of your life, about the meaninglessness of their lives, about giving meaning to every human existence. You are engaged in the argument of Giordano Bruno with the Inquisitor, of the Decembrist with the tsarist police superintendent, of Walerian Lukaszinski with the tsarist angel of annihilation, of Carl von Ossietzky with the blond Gestapo officer, of Osip Mandelstam with a member of the Bolshevik party dressed in a uniform with the blue piping of the NKVD. You are engaged in the never-ending argument about which Henryk Elzberg²⁶¹ once said that the value of your participation cannot be gauged in terms of your chances of victory but rather by the value of your idea. In other words, you score a victory not when you win power but when you remain faithful to yourself.²⁶²

That faithfulness to oneself is, for Michnik, a key requirement in order to be an “authentic” *intelligent* and, therefore, live up to the task of defending values and

Scythia (basically actual Ukraine and Southern Russia), spreading westwards up to the Vistula river in its most expansive period.

²⁵⁸ Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 260.

²⁵⁹ MICEWSKI, Andrzej: “Naród i państwo”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 22-VII-1979, 1, also MICEWSKI, Andrzej: “Polski temat”, in Micewski: *Polityka...*, 344.

²⁶⁰ Micewski: “Polski temat”, 343, my transl.

²⁶¹ H. Elzberg (1887-1967) was a Polish philosopher and historian.

²⁶² MICHNIK, Adam: “Why You Are Not Signing...: A Letter from Białołęka Internment Camp 1982”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 7.

formulating alternatives. This mission was carried out before by those whom he considered his models: the “unbowed” *inteligencja* of the early twentieth century, represented by Brzozowski²⁶³, Wyspiański²⁶⁴, Żeromski²⁶⁵ and Nałkowski²⁶⁶. Despite the fact that the voices of their followers were “still faint”, Michnik said, “it is they who create independent, public opinion and develop nonconformist attitudes”²⁶⁷. This shows his conviction regarding tradition and his perception of time: the “seeds” sowed in the past are still capable of bearing fruit in the present. And by putting together intellectuals with divergent or even opposite convictions, ranging from critical Marxism to patriotic neo-Romanticism, Michnik was also betting on a more global, trans-ideological definition of *inteligencja*, characterized above all by its feeling of national and social duty, engaged with the nation’s problems and needs and encouraging collective awareness through different fields of education and art. The message for his colleagues is clear: it was time to join the efforts of all the worthy persons who, despite their attachment to different intellectual backgrounds, aimed for the same goals-ideals. It was precisely that diversity of Polish traditions, plus the right to develop them freely, what should be preserved and defended by *inteligenci*.

Following with the idealistic trend, Tadeusz Łepkowski spotted in “Polish national character” a fondness for emotions and principles, even for intuition rather than reason, and in general a Romantic tendency to “thinking with the heart” up until present time (1983), for better... but also for worse, as *Solidarność*’s political imprudence or its internal quarrels and divisions had shown²⁶⁸. However, Micewski considered that, contrary to what official media argued, Romanticism cannot be said to have reactionary

²⁶³ Stanisław Brzozowski (1878-1911) was a Polish philosopher, publicist and literary critic. He coined the concept “philosophy of labor”. As a student in Warsaw, he participated in the 1897 riots against Russian professors teaching at the University, and was expelled for a whole year. Intellectually close to historical materialism, he nevertheless questioned its determinism and was a first-rate supporter of *inteligencja*’s social commitment. He opposed to the writing of historical novels, such as Henryk Sienkiewicz’s, and was very critical with mainstream cultural movements like Young Poland, especially in his 1910 work *Legenda Młodej Polski. Studia o strukturze duszy kulturalnej* [*The Legend of Young Poland. Studies on the Structure of the Cultural Spirit*]. See Walicki: *Philosophy and Romantic...*, 388-389.

²⁶⁴ Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907) was a Polish playwright, painter and poet of the Young Poland circle (*Młoda Polska*, Polish modernism). The latter was a specifically Polish modernist movement which, in opposition to the previous Positivist hegemony, encouraged trends such as symbolism, neo-Romanticism, decadence, or *art nouveau*. Wyspiański, who spent most of his life in Cracow, was the acclaimed author of several national dramas, such as *Warszawianka* [Varsovian Anthem], as well as of the famous play *Wesele* [The Wedding], a critical portrait of Polish 19th-century society and the situation of Partitioned Poland. Romantic themes and folk tales were a frequent basis of his works.

²⁶⁵ Stefan Żeromski (1864-1925) was Polish writer, publicist and playwright, dubbed “Polish literature’s conscience”. Supporter of democracy and socialism, during the Partition period he participated in several clandestine educational initiatives addressed to craftsmen and industrial workers, and promoted the foundation of the Peoples’ University (*Uniwersytet Ludu*). He was the author, among others, of the novels *Popioły* [Ashes] (1904), *Wiatr od morza* [Sea wind] (1922) and *Przedwiośnie* [*The Coming Spring*] (1924).

²⁶⁶ Wacław Nałkowski (1851-1911) was a Polish geographer, educator, publicist and social activist. Despite being a good student, he was always on the verge of poverty, and managed to survive thanks in part to the regular incomes of his Geography lessons. He was the co-author of the biggest Polish atlas, *Wielki atlas geograficzny* (1890s), as well as of other scientific geographic works. He also published in journals and reviews many texts dealing with current social issues, such as Darwinism, women’s rights, clericalism, the proletariat’s situation, etc.

²⁶⁷ MICHNIK, Adam: “The New Evolutionism”, *Survey*, 22(3/4), Summer/Autumn 1976, 276.

²⁶⁸ ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: *Myśli o historii Polski i Polaków*, Warszawa, CDN, 1983, 39-42.

aspirations: “As far as I know”, he remarked ironically, “no-one of us wishes to re-establish feudal or bourgeois exploitation, thus there is nothing to fear”²⁶⁹.

On the other hand, Tadeusz Stański (n. 1948), co-founder of the first opposition political party, the Confederation of Independent Poland (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej, KPN), took Romanticism in its best sense when he appealed to the uprising traditions of his birthplace region during the trial against KPN leaders in Warsaw’s Military Court (September 23-October 5, 1982). Podlasie, he said then, has always given priests, soldiers and clerks to the Polish Republic, and during the January Uprising, in 1863, *kosynierzy* and the rest of the men were ready to fight. This was also the way he perceived his political activities in KPN, and asserted that, before the Communist court, he felt like a soldier²⁷⁰.

But Stański’s last words during the hearing contained two other more specific historical references in an attempt to connect or compare the past with his present circumstances: the trials against *filareci* (1823)²⁷¹ and the Patriotic Society (Towarzystwo Patriotyczne), the latter taking place in 1828-1829²⁷². What linked these early nineteenth-century cases with KPN’s, according to Stański, was their common patriotic struggle in favor of an independent Polish State, either through education or through an armed uprising, and stressed that Poles simply couldn’t be condemned for their national feelings²⁷³. If looked from the opposite angle (that of the court of “justice”), we also spot in Stański’s words the perception of a common enemy. All the examples he provided have to do with the former Russian part of Poland, as if there was also a continuity in terms of dominion and hence of injustice: from the Romanov empire to the Soviet one. These kinds of parallels between Partition and PRL times were frequently drawn in opposition narratives.

Apart from purely positive opinions, we may also find among opposition *inteligenci* some justifications for extreme idealistic behavior (insurrectionism), with a tinge of fatalism at times. For instance, in his preface to Wojciech Karpiński’s and Marcin Król’s *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku*, Henryk Wereszycki²⁷⁴ considered that, due to the exceptional situation of Polish territories during the nineteenth century, political Romanticism and uprisings looked like the only possible self-defense in a period of intense dreams of greatness²⁷⁵. Similarly, within the framework of the idealism-realism controversy between columnists of the Catholic critical weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and the more open-minded but still official *Polityka* (1977-1978),

²⁶⁹ Micewski: “Polski temat”, 338, my transl.

²⁷⁰ Tadeusz Stański’s speech in *Ostatnie słowa... Proces KPN 23.09-05.10 1982* (Tadeusz Jandiszak, Leszek Moczulski, Tadeusz Stański and Romuald Szeremietiew), Warszawa, Oficyna Wydawnicza Pokolenie, 1985, 20.

²⁷¹ The Filaret Association [Zgromadzenie Filaretów] was a secret Polish pro-independent group created in 1820 by Tomasz Zan. It was dependent on the also patriotic and educational Philomath Society (the *filomaci*), formed by students of the University of Vilnius, like the poet Adam Mickiewicz.

²⁷² The Patriotic Society was a pro-independent group founded in 1821 by Major Walerian Łukasiński. After his arrest in 1822, the organization was headed by Seweryn Krzyżanowski. Its aim was to carry out an armed uprising against the Russian government in order to recover Polish statehood as it was in 1772. Its leaders were arrested and put on trial after the failure of the Russian Decembrists’ uprising (1825), with whom they had contact.

²⁷³ Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 10.

²⁷⁴ Henryk Wereszycki (1898-1990) was an expert in Polish nineteenth-century history, professor at Wrocław and Jagiellonian Universities and one of the few historians within academia who openly put into question official Marxist historiography. Between 1969 and 1982 he published in the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and joined TKN in 1976. KOR members usually met at his house. See more on him in Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 273-295.

²⁷⁵ WERESZYCKI, Henryk: “Przedmowa”, in Karpiński and Król: *Sylwetki polityczne...*, 10.

Marcin Król and Andrzej Micewski agreed with the idea that, in the past, there were circumstances in which one could be a realist out of choice, and others when Romanticism was simply the single way out. Romanticism provided people who had been deprived of every other possibility of action a series of means to try to achieve their goals and take an active stance against what was going on in Partitioned Poland's social life. This situation was defined by Król as "compulsory Romanticism" (*Romantyzm z przymusu*)²⁷⁶.

Tadeusz Łepkowski also shared this opinion, and related it, as his colleagues did, to Poland's special circumstances, which couldn't be compared to those of Western European countries. Idealism, in the former's case, was not tantamount to unattainable targets, inefficiency and failure, but to safeguard of Polishness, which, in his opinion, would have gradually disappeared if more "realistic" attitudes had been taken, rendering Poland a "soulless nation". In other words, Polish idealistic and realistic trends were product of national history, hence of Polish idiosyncrasy:

In France, England or Sweden, the policy representing the touchstone of values is efficiency: it establishes rational activities to achieve goals that are, in the given conditions, achievable. In Poland the aspiration is to achieve theoretically unachievable goals. The ideal-utopia is our cornerstone. Typical of revolutionary thought, typical of revolutionary deeds. Easy inference: a permanent feature of Polish politics, and therefore a national feature, is idealism, Romanticism and utopianism, in other words, inefficiency. Is it really so? Not completely. Poland's supposedly naïve and emotional political activities have proved to be surprisingly efficient. It allowed us to exist as a nation, it once allowed the achievement of that which, in "normal conditions", was acknowledged as an unachievable independence (1918) and several times what looked like a hardly attainable autonomy of semi-independence (1807, 1815, 1945).

It is frequently said, especially lately, that the lack of political acumen and culture is characteristic of Poles. But if we were "realist" in the same way as stable states with favorable geopolitical conditions, this wouldn't be any longer our nation. A real "realist" in Poland must be a defeatist. A defeatist can only aim to preserve a nation without a soul, a people of prisoners speaking better or worse Polish, a façade-State, a feigned State and national reality. Nothing else. To condemn Polish political irrationalism, or to lament the Polish bloodsheds from 1794 up until the victims of the anti-Polish military counterrevolution of 1981-1982²⁷⁷ proves a lack of knowledge of our history as well as a lack of authentic political realism.²⁷⁸

"In our conditions", concluded Łepkowski further along in his text, "national politics without farsightedness, without great goals, without imagination, without mad fantasy and without utopia is unrealistic"²⁷⁹.

The idea of a "last resort Romanticism" was "taken back" to the present in a more explicit way by Adam Michnik, who admitted in his article "On Resistance" ("O oporze") that, before Martial Law, he was not in favor of conspiracy strategies within opposition circles but that, after it, General Jaruzelski had left Poles no other option: "I am one of those who in the past ten or so years have criticized the idea of conspiratorial activity. Today I am for organizing an underground. We have no choice. Jaruzelski has made the choice for us"²⁸⁰.

²⁷⁶ KRÓL, Marcin: "Realistyczna propozycja", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 25-IX-1977, 1; Micewski: "Polski temat", 341; also MICHNIK, Adam: "Powstanie listopadowe — polskie pytania", *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 17, 1984, 83-84.

²⁷⁷ A reference to the establishment of Martial Law.

²⁷⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 41-42, my transl.

²⁷⁹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 69, my transl. Also 68. A similar opinion is shared by Davies: *God's Playground...*, 17-18.

²⁸⁰ MICHNIK, Adam: "On Resistance: A Letter From Białoleka 1982", in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 53.

B.2) Positivism-realism

Despite there being more or less latent political trends along the nineteenth century, fully-fledged Positivism and “organic work” spread in Polish lands especially after the last major repressed uprising of the 1800s, that of January 1863.

This defeat made *inteligenci* react in different ways and consolidated the previously incipient division of generations and world views. It also changed or challenged *inteligencja*’s self-perception, ideological stances and its fondness for Romantic traditions, generating negative opinions about past Polish nobility and uprisings which were taken up again by Communist official media during PRL times²⁸¹. In the last third of the nineteenth century, a conservative, critical Positivism was especially promoted by a group of scholars known as the Cracow School of historiography, headed by Walerian Kalinka, Józef Szujski and Michał Bobrzyński, among others. Its members condemned Polish nobility’s (*szlachta*’s) past freedoms and excesses because, according to them, they led to Partitions and to desperate armed insurrections that had only worsened Poland’s catastrophic situation²⁸². However, many opposition *inteligenci* of the 1970s and 1980s tended to stress that this wasn’t the single (nor the best) option available within the realistic spectrum back then.

Despite speaking rarely about Polish contemporary history or getting involved in *publicystyka*’s “idealism vs. realism” discussions, in an entry written for a French historical dictionary professor Bronisław Geremek seemed to take a clear stance for another kind of Positivism which, according to him, envisaged a better future and never ceased to work for it: that promoted by the Warsaw School of history.

After the January uprising, he said, many Polish scholars and intellectuals began to ask themselves about the causes of Poland’s downfall. This assessment of national past in search for responsibilities took to controversy and disagreements between *inteligenci* who had a more pessimistic view and those who had a more optimistic one. The members of the Cracow School, who were deeply monarchical and worshipped the State and the law system, considered that Poland’s loss of independence was caused by the Poles’ own faults and mistakes, and they opposed to liberation movements because they were an expression of the conspiratorial tendencies of Poles. On the other hand, the historians of Warsaw School followed Joachim Lelewel and rejected Cracow School’s theories. They placed the nation above the State in their analyses and claimed that it was foreign violence what provoked the loss of Polish independence. Tadeusz Korzon (1839-1918), for instance, proved that the *Rzeczypospolita*’s division took place precisely when it was recovering from past problems and gathering new strength. Thus, Geremek summarized, it was during this period when present-day political options took shape “...concernant le choix entre la politique de la soumission à l’occupant et les aspirations à l’indépendance”, that is, between a short-sighted “realism” or rather

²⁸¹ BOCHENSKI, Aleksander: *Dzieje głupoty w Polsce: pamflety dziejopisarskie*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Panteon, 1947.

This was not, however, a fixed position within PRL officialdom, for it also resorted to some aspects of Romantic tradition at times, especially for its national-Communist project, and criticized different elements of Positivism. See for instance Kuczynski: *The Changing picture...*, 79-87. For the view of Romanticism of Marx, Engels and some of their Polish followers: Walicki: *Philosophy and Romantic...*, 358-391.

²⁸² Micińska: “Dzieje inteligencji...”, 47-64; Kuczynski: *The Changing picture...*, 12-13, 61-78; Walicki: *Philosophy and Romantic...*, 337-344.

defeatism, which simply and unquestionably accepted foreign dominion, and a Realism which never forgot about its principles and ultimate aspirations²⁸³.

Back in 1975, Adam Michnik already argued that Polish “organic work” was conceived as a way to achieve independence, and that it was destined to fulfill the aims of the nation, and not those of partitioning empires. Therefore, to be an “organicist” didn’t mean to

... accept legalism, since what was legal had been declared such by the legislation of the invader and matched the interests of the invading power. The main criterion should be not legalism but reality. To put it more succinctly: the actions to be stipulated and favored were those that had as their point of reference not the law formulated by the invader in accordance with the invader’s reason of State, but rather the needs of the Poles for an independent existence.²⁸⁴

Among the multiple classifications one could come up with for the heterogeneous Polish political spectrum at the turn of the century, Michnik suggested a simple division “between those who believed that realism entailed activity within the limits defined by the partitioning power and those who favor the concept of building an active Polish politics outside those limits”²⁸⁵. Hence, he re-located in the first years of the twentieth century his present concerns about the building of a politically conscious social sphere beyond Communist officialdom. This connection does not provide a mere continuity in political views and attitudes between yesterday and today, but one based specifically on hope: since the groups and parties formed back then (especially the Socialist Party and National Democracy) promoted independence and attained it after the Great War, the implicit message is that Poles could take once again that road towards a freer country through the formation of a more autonomous society, since, in their case, a nominally independent State already existed. The methods used by the national democrats in the decades previous to independence were of a special interest for Michnik during his imprisonment in the Białołęka Jailhouse²⁸⁶:

Self-determination consists of internal national self-organization and external activist policies with determined goals. Internal self-organization means respecting the nation’s own norms and demands, independent of the penal code that exists in accordance with the wishes of the partitioning power. It means satisfying a maximum of national needs regardless of the institutions imposed by the invader. It means the positive creation and functioning of an independent public life in which the supreme national ambitions are discussed, formulated, and socially accepted. A conscious politics of activism means the implementation of these goals by both legal and illegal methods —legal ones by seeking out the gaps in the invader’s organizational and legal systems, illegal ones by creating secret institutions and organizing actions condemned by the legal code. Activist politics also consists of the cool analysis of political situations and their comparison with current tactics and the hierarchy of demands. It requires an assessment of what can be achieved today and what should be put off until later.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ GEREMEK, Bronisław: “Pologne. Historiographie polonaise”, in BURGUIÈRE, André (dir.): *Dictionnaire des sciences historiques*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1986, 523.

²⁸⁴ MICHNIK, Adam: “The Dispute Over Organic Work”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison*..., 242. A similar proposal in BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Walka na tysiąc rund”, in BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: *Skąd przychodzimy?*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1978 (1975), 35-36.

²⁸⁵ MICHNIK, Adam: “Conversation in the Citadel”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison*..., 278.

²⁸⁶ This is especially valid for his essay “Conversation in the Citadel”. Michnik, who didn’t conceal his liking for socialist tradition and the figure of Józef Piłsudski, aimed in this text to provide a different view of National Democracy by putting aside the usual left-wing prejudices. He acted, thus, as the devil’s advocate by revisiting national democratic movement in a more positive and constructive way. See his explanations in his epilogue to the article: Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 329-332.

²⁸⁷ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 285-286.

Andrzej Micewski also divided Polish Realism at the end of the nineteenth century into two historical traditions: one in which its members limited themselves to what was possible right then (eg. the “polityka realna” of the conservative circle) and another that took on account what could become possible tomorrow as well. He linked the latter to the right-winged National-Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne* or *Narodowa Demokracja*²⁸⁸); in fact, Micewski even wrote in the early 1970s a biography of the *endecja* co-founder Roman Dmowski²⁸⁹. However, within that Realism which led to the recovery of Polish statehood, the author still perceived a Romantic backdrop: “Though I consider that (...) [National Democracy] contributed to achieve independence through education and by ensuring Poland’s presence in [the meeting and Treaty of] Versailles, there can be no doubt that the Romantic nucleus of our whole partition period played a decisive role in this achievement”²⁹⁰.

Stefan Bratkowski, on the other hand, disagreed with the hypothesis that Romanticism was such a crucial, or entirely positive, component of national identity. During the 1970s, he took on the task of vindicating eighteenth-century Enlightenment’s and nineteenth-century Positivism’s less known achievements in order to provide another, more balanced version of how modern Poland was built. Closer to 1956’s theses of reform of Communism from within²⁹¹, he was against the glorification of Romantic poets and rejected the idea that only words were a worthy method of defending Polish nation. He considered that Polish philologists specialized in Slavic-Polish studies²⁹², like Maria Janion, encouraged this kind of biased perception of the past, and criticized them for it²⁹³.

In a revised and extended version of his compilation of articles entitled “Where do we come from?” (*Skąd przychodzimy?*, 1978), Bratkowski aimed for a much broader view of these trends, beyond a purely political public sphere. He argued that Positivism didn’t just consist of *publicystyka* and literature, but also of all kinds of educational and technical improvements, such as those brought about by engineers and managers²⁹⁴. He devoted many of these essays to specific figures of Polish history, not just to highlight their merits and show how they contributed to Poland’s advance, but also to look for inspiration for the present and re-establish a continuity with an underestimated or almost forgotten part of the past, both on the official and the critical intellectual’s side.

For instance, he revisited Stanisław Konarski (1700-1773)²⁹⁵, who, in the mid-eighteenth century, betted on a lay education supplied by the State and, during his late years, founded the Collegium Nobilium (1740) and focused on training the sons of the decadent Polish noble elites, in whom he saw a chance for the *Rzeczpospolita*’s regeneration, being, thus, a forerunner of the later Commission of National Education

²⁸⁸ Very frequently referred to as *Endecja* due to its abbreviation (ND).

²⁸⁹ MICEWSKI, Andrzej: *Roman Dmowski*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo “Verum”, 1971.

²⁹⁰ Micewski: “Polski temat”, 339, my transl. About the neopositivistic trend and the “revival” of Dmowski’s thought within Catholic *inteligencja* circles like Znak: Bromke: *Poland’s Politics...*, 232-251.

²⁹¹ Despite his problems with Communist authorities (eg. the weekly supplement of the daily newspaper *Życie Warszawy* which he founded and directed was liquidated in 1973), Bratkowski kept his PZPR membership until 1981, when he was expelled from the Party. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 3.

²⁹² Called *Polonistyka* in Polish.

²⁹³ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Dziedzictwo”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 229-250.

²⁹⁴ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Ci bardziej prawdziwi pozytywiści polscy”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 299-323.

²⁹⁵ Stanisław Konarski was a monk, pedagogue, educational reformer, writer and one of the precursors of the Enlightenment in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

(Komisja Edukacji Narodowej, KEN²⁹⁶)²⁹⁷. He criticized the absence of certain important figures in popularizing historical works, such as count Karol Brzostowski (1796-1854), founder of the autonomous community of free peasants “Rzeczpospolita Sztabińska” (Republic of Sztabin), just because he didn’t match the stereotype of a cosmopolitan betrayer-magnate favored by Communist officialdom²⁹⁸. Or pointed up the convenience of not resorting to violence in order to change things through the examples of the enlightened newspaper *Monitor*, published in 1765 for the first time²⁹⁹, and of the almost Protestant work ethic of Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826)³⁰⁰, founder of the peasant community Towarzystwo Hrubieszowski (Hrubieszów Agricultural Society) in 1816³⁰¹. Writing about them, as well as about Piotr Michałowski (1800-1855) or those who contributed to the development of Greater Poland when it was part of Prussia (Hipolit Cegielski, Walenty Stefański, father Piotr Wawrzyniak...)³⁰², Bratkowski vindicated aspects and qualities of Realism which, despite being present in Polish traditions, had been generally neglected in history books, like rational organization, creativity, entrepreneurship, self-government and industriousness. In sum, for the author, the best form of patriotism and active commitment was based on orderly, constant everyday work driven by the wish of building a freer and fairer society.

B.3) “Romantivism”. Preserving the best of both traditions

... only the weak are sent out on paths without perils. But never forget what I have told you so often: our mission is to recognize contraries for what they are: first of all as contraries, but then as opposite poles of a unity.

Hermann Hesse: *The Glass Bead Game* (*Magister Ludi*)

In a work published in the 1960s, Adam Bromke supported that the dualism between idealism and realism in Poland could be explained to a great extent by geopolitics, or, as the author puts it, by the country’s “security dilemma”: its location in the midst of two great powers, Prussia/Germany and Russia/the USSR. Since this dilemma had, in his opinion, remained unchanged until present time (1967), so had these political options, despite the great socio-economic changes experienced in PRL period³⁰³. External factors determined the shift from one political program to the other, according to him; hence, in a moment when realism was predominant, “the prospects for a revival of political idealism hinge above all on the Poles securing satisfactory support from without”³⁰⁴.

²⁹⁶ The Commission of National Education was created in 1773 by the Sejm and the Polish King Stanisław August Poniatowski. It is considered the first Ministry of Education and a very relevant landmark within Polish Enlightenment.

²⁹⁷ Bratkowski: “Walka...”, 27-38.

²⁹⁸ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Utopista, któremu się powiodło”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 78-89.

²⁹⁹ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Jak być obecnym”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 44-52.

³⁰⁰ Stanisław Staszic was a Catholic priest, statesman, geologist, philosopher, writer and one of the leading figures of Polish Enlightenment. He is also considered one of the founding fathers of May 3rd 1791 Constitution. Along his life promoted reforms in many different fields and contributed to Poland’s intellectual and industrial development.

³⁰¹ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Bóg mu powierzył rozsądek Polaków”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 53-77.

³⁰² BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Kordian, który się nie nudził”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 130-155; BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Najdłuższa wojna Polaków”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 251-278.

³⁰³ Bromke: *Poland’s Politics...*, 252-265.

³⁰⁴ Bromke: *Poland’s Politics...*, 264.

One must bear in mind, however, that since organized networks of dissidents and collaboration between different critical groups hadn't yet been fully arranged and developed, Bromke was referring mainly to official positions and tolerated Catholic associations' media. Without denying the fundamental importance that international elements and affairs had for Poland, especially in the 1970s-1980s, and finally during the country's *transformacja* (eg. the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope, the liberal-conservative governments in the US and the UK, Gorbachev's rise to power in the USSR, or the émigrés' contribution), within Polish opposition movements this was experienced slightly otherwise. The sources I have analyzed prove that, although *inteligenci's* plans and proposals certainly took on account foreign circumstances and risks, like a possible adverse reaction of the Soviet Union to PRL government's concessions to opposition (the previous invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 were much taken on account), their idealistic and/or realistic stances also stemmed from an inner factor —perhaps the innermost: the belief in Polish society's power to change things (Chapter 2). Hence their insistence, as we will see in Chapter 3, on discarding the myth of the "betrayal of the West" and their warnings about relying exclusively on external help to solve Poland's problems. The answer to them would have to emanate, on the contrary, from the Poles themselves. No-one else could take the initiative. These proposals of creating an autonomous and self-organized society were probably more clearly stated and developed by lay, left-wing *inteligencja*, but it is also true, and so the latter acknowledged it too³⁰⁵, that they were in part shaping a theory which the Church and Catholic *inteligencja* had already been putting into practice in a smaller scale before, contributing to the formation of many "freedom of expression oases", like the KIKs (Kluby Inteligencji Katolickiej: Catholic *Inteligencja* Clubs) or *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

What interests us more for the present chapter is, nevertheless, Bromke's suggestion about the compatibility and complementarity of idealistic and realistic traditions. It was not something new, the author explains, or characteristic of PRL times only: first line political leaders like Roman Dmowski, the main ideologue of the National Democracy party, looked in the first decades of the twentieth century for a synthesis of the moderate versions of both tendencies³⁰⁶. Other specialists, like Andrzej Walicki, go further back and spot conciliatory trends in some *inteligenci's* political thought since approximately the 1840s (Libelt, Cieszkowski, Szczepanowski, Orzeszkowa...)³⁰⁷. Despite the specificities of the moment in which Bromke published his book and the difficulty to foresee exactly how the Polish situation would change along the following decade, his argument about balanced formulae and position shifts remains valid for opposition circles in the 1970s and 1980s: "... to oscillate between moderate versions of political idealism and political realism has served the interests of the Polish nation well. (...) If anything, by alternating between romanticism and positivism the Poles have consolidated their strength"³⁰⁸.

The "self-limiting revolution" idea, stated previously by Jacek Kuroń or Adam Michnik and taken up in 1980 by the new-born *Solidarność* movement³⁰⁹, is perhaps the clearest and most widespread example of a combination of elements from idealistic and realistic traditions. *Solidarność* made Polish Communist government acknowledge the existence of an independent, self-governing trade union for the first time. Therefore, it

³⁰⁵ Michnik: *The Church...*

³⁰⁶ Bromke: *Poland's Politics...*, 252-254.

³⁰⁷ Walicki: *Philosophy and Romantic...*, 342 and ff.

³⁰⁸ Bromke: *Poland's Politics...*, 254.

³⁰⁹ Howe: "The Polish Resistance".

was not just another movement: it put into question PRL's legitimacy and set up an alternative one based on democracy and the liberation of civil society. The workers had taken the initiative, organized and coordinated themselves with other social groups to face the power that was supposedly representing them. These critical circles achieved unprecedented goals by taking this path. That was, indeed, something revolutionary, as some oppositionists and external observers pointed out back then. But there were also self-limiting components: Poland's geopolitical situation and dependence on the USSR made the main opposition groups take a moderate stance and not put openly into question the "alliance" with the Soviet Union. Periodic repression waves after previous protests both in the country (1956, 1968, 1970, 1976) and abroad (Hungary and Czechoslovakia), were borne seriously in mind, hence the determination to avoid violence and to press Communist authorities to negotiate with opposition in spite of their mutual distrust³¹⁰.

We will now go through other balanced or conciliatory proposals which can be found in opposition's historical narratives, connecting *inteligencja's* view of Polish past with a present they perceive "in need". Moderate formulae were elaborated by *inteligenci* in at least one of these three different ways: firstly, by recovering neglected trends, figures and aspects of Polish history; secondly, by challenging the idealistic-realistic dichotomy through the suggestion of alternative chronologies or, especially, the redefinition/ reinterpretation of these concepts; and thirdly, by pointing out the negative outcomes of extreme idealism or realism and putting forward a "middle path" solution, usually based on education and social consciousness.

B.3.1) Recovering neglected aspects and figures in Polish history

The first step towards the formulation of a balanced tradition involved the access to an equally balanced and wide-ranged historical knowledge that saved from oblivion ignored or underestimated events and processes, acknowledged the patriotic contribution of the promoters of improvement and, at the same time, avoided one-sidedness and stereotypes. Polish historiography and historical *publicystyka*, however, whether published officially or unofficially, did not always fulfill these conditions, according to some intellectuals.

We have seen before, for instance, that Stefan Bratkowski complained especially about the negligent treatment given to many outstanding eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Polish organic and positivist reformers in favor of so-called "romantics". Through short biographical essays, compiled in the volume *Skąd przychodzimy*, he insisted on the fact that prominent figures such as Karol Brzostowski, Stanisław Staszic or Stanisław Konarski, actively involved in the nation's development, were nonetheless hardly mentioned in fundamental Polish history books and encyclopedias, were not paid public tribute or still lacked a complete biographical study³¹¹.

³¹⁰ Baczko: "Polska Solidarności...", 122. See Chapter 2 for more on Solidarity's revolution.

³¹¹ Bratkowski: "Dziedzictwo", 233-250; "Ci bardziej prawdziwi...", 299-323; "Utopista...", 78-79; "Bóg mu powierzył...", 57; "Walka...", 32. In fact, Staszic's figure was appreciated by Communist officialdom and among Polish Marxist academics, who highlighted his materialist, determinist and anti-clerical views. Not long after the first publication of Bratkowski's *Skąd przychodzimy?*, in 1976, the 150th anniversary of his death was commemorated.

Despite not sharing Bratkowski's enthusiasm for Staszic due to the latter's political evolution³¹², Adam Michnik was also concerned about past and present prejudices favoring a Manichean and sterile historiography, and therefore tried to highlight the complexity of each historical figure and moment. In response, for example, to what he considered a biased attack to the "conformist" attitude of intellectuals in PRL regime³¹³, Michnik resorted to the nineteenth-century conflict between organic work and insurrectionist positions to argue that, bearing in mind the context and perceptions which conditioned people's decisions, one may not support the reasons for their behavior or changes of mind, like those of Staszic or Hugo Kołłątaj³¹⁴, but can at least understand them better and at the same time recognize their merits³¹⁵.

Precisely regarding changes of mind and adaptations, Marcin Król considered, in a more understanding tone, that circumstances could greatly influence the personal evolution of an intellectual or a politician, thus limiting or even determining what one could do in each situation. To act according to circumstances didn't mean to give up one's goals, but to act logically and look for a different method to achieve them. Maurycy Mochnacki³¹⁶, for instance,

... was a romantic before and during the November Uprising, after its fall he became a realist, but his former allies and supporters never ceased to remind him that, somehow, he had betrayed their cause. But where's that betrayal? And what was that cause? Mochnacki rationally recognized that after the fall of the Uprising it was necessary to fight to preserve so-called national substance and not risk another failed and simultaneously impossible uprising.³¹⁷

In other words, *inteligenci* like Król or Michnik tended to stress that the history of contemporary Poland was the result of a sum of different efforts, intellectual trends and political initiatives, plus the contexts in which they flourished, and therefore couldn't be fully understood without taking them all on account:

... there existed different ways of fighting for the Polish cause, and they varied in their effectiveness. Those who took part in the armed insurrections were not the only ones fighting for the nation's existence. At times it was accommodation which brought good results, at other times legal opposition; still other times the people were virtually condemned to organic work. If at the time of Kościuszko³¹⁸ or of the Polish legions in the Napoleonic wars, or of the 'November night' [November 23, 1830], the tactic of rising up made sense (and I believe that it did, even though this is still questioned even today), it is nevertheless likewise certain that the

³¹² Since 1814, Staszic supported the Russian Empire and was in favor of the creation of a great Slavic kingdom. He held several political posts in the Russian partition and backed a controversial censorship law in 1819.

³¹³ WIERZBICKI, Piotr: "Traktat o gnidach", *Zapis*, 9, January 1979, 106-126.

³¹⁴ Hugo Kołłątaj (1750-1812): one of the most prominent figures of the Enlightenment period in Poland. Catholic priest, philosopher, historian, political thinker and social activist, he carried out very relevant educational reforms at all levels and was the co-author of May 3rd Constitution 1791. However, during the Polish-Russian war (1792) he persuaded the Polish King Stanisław August to join the Targowica Confederation, which brought down the new Constitution, and left the country as an exile. In 1794 he actively participated in Kościuszko's uprising and was imprisoned by the Austrians until 1802.

³¹⁵ Michnik: "Maggots and Angels", 170-173; Lipski: *KOR...*, 73-74.

³¹⁶ Maurycy Mochnacki (1803-1834): publicist, journalist, writer, historian and pro-independence activist, besides one of the main theoreticians of Polish Romanticism. He fought in several battles during the November Uprising (1830).

³¹⁷ Król: "Realistyczna...", 1, my transl.

³¹⁸ Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817) was a military engineer and leader. He fought against Russia and Prussia in favor of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as on the American side in the American Independence War. As the Supreme Commander of the Polish National Armed Forces, he led the 1794 Uprising (also known as Kościuszko Uprising) and is considered a national hero.

insurrectionist conspiracies in the Kingdom of Poland during the era of Governor Paskevich were in all probability political nonsense. We identify most closely with the tradition of uprisings. And no wonder. Without this tradition we would be a different nation today—a more submissive one, far easier to subjugate. It makes sense, then, that the Poles' spiritual self-image is based on personages such as Kościuszko, Prądzyński³¹⁹, Traugutt³²⁰, and Piłsudski. But what would our national consciousness look like without all the other people who sought out different roads? Without Staszic and Stanisław Potocki³²¹, without the Hôtel Lambert³²² and the Galician conservatives, without Świętochowski³²³ and Spasowicz^{324,325}

In his determination to show a richer and more varied history of Poland, Bratkowski not only spread knowledge about eighteenth-century constructivists and nineteenth-century positivists, but also highlighted a different, less known face of classic figures of Polish Romanticism and insurrectionism. For instance, the romantic poet *par excellence* Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) would suit much better, according to his description, the image of a Renaissance or Enlightenment man, due to his vast knowledge in the most varied disciplines, such as Mathematics, Sciences, Political Economy, Law or History. He was certainly a remarkable intellectual, but not the single one: other *filomaci*³²⁶, like Tomasz Zan, Jan Sobolewski or Franciszek Malewski were excellent students and specialists too, besides devoting some of their time to poetry, literature and pro-independence activities. Similarly, the famous nineteenth-century painter Michałowski was also an outstanding manager and economist; Karol Brzozowski (1821-1904), a competent engineer who built telegraphic lines in the Ottoman Empire, is rather remembered as a writer, when that was actually a late and secondary occupation for him; and Ludwik Nabelak (1804-1883), the prototype of the Polish romantic, directed a gas factory in Barcelona and a mine in the Atlas mountains before taking part in two uprisings (1848, 1863). With these examples, among others, Bratkowski pointed out that, back then, literature, arts and humanities were still

³¹⁹ Ignacy Prądzyński (1792-1850) was a Polish military commander and general of the Polish Army, veteran of the Napoleonic Wars. He was one of the most famous and successful commanders of November 1830 uprising.

³²⁰ Romuald Traugutt (1826-1864) was a military commander of 1863 January Uprising. Between October 1863 and August 1864 he became the Dictator of the new-born national government. Once the Uprising had been crushed by Russian authorities, he was sentenced to death and hanged near the Warsaw Citadel.

³²¹ Stanisław Potocki (1751-1805) was a Polish magnate and military commander. He opposed May 3rd Constitution and led the Targowica Confederation with Russia's help in order to maintain the ancient Polish institutions and revert the previous reforms (May 1792). This took to the Polish-Russian War and to the second partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

³²² The "Hôtel Lambert" was a Polish monarchic liberal-conservative group constituted in Paris in 1831, after the November 1830 Uprising, and headed by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Its members belonged to the well-off circles of the Great Emigration. They defended May 3rd Constitution's principles and hoped for the intervention of Western European countries in the "Polish question". Its headquarters were located in a palace named "Hôtel Lambert", hence its name.

³²³ Aleksander Świętochowski (1849-1938) was a Polish writer, educator and philosopher. He was the champion of Positivism after the failed January 1863 Uprising. He betted on scientific, educational and economic development and on equality of rights.

³²⁴ Włodzimierz Spasowicz (1829-1906) was a Polish-Russian lawyer, social activist and writer. He was in favor of a conciliation policy regarding Polish-Russian relations and of Poland's cultural autonomy within the Russian Empire.

³²⁵ Michnik: "Maggots and Angels", 173-174.

³²⁶ Members of the secret Philomath Association (1817-1823), formed by students and some academics of Vilnius University (within the Russian Empire), including Mickiewicz. At the beginning it had mainly self-educational goals, but eventually focused on a more active support of Poland's independence. Discovered by Russian authorities in 1823, the Association was dissolved and many of its members were on trial (1824), being sentenced to prison, deported to Siberia or dismissed from their posts.

perfectly compatible with entrepreneurship and organization tasks, and ideals with practical, constructive work. One didn't have to be necessarily (or exclusively) a poet, a conspirer or a soldier to have patriotic feelings and contribute to Poland's progress³²⁷.

In that line, Bratkowski also reproached historians for magnifying past Polish failures and glorifying the victims of defeats, to the point of almost forgetting about successes which were attained after many years of effort and everyday work³²⁸. To illustrate this, and as a good-humored response to the letter of one of his readers, who said it was easier to write and read about Joan of Arc than about potatoes, he devoted an essay precisely to these tubers and to the people who contributed to make their crops thrive:

Joan of Arc has hundreds of plays and monuments dedicated to her. No-one has built a monument to the potato, which has saved the lives of millions of people, though maybe it's due to its poor photogenic qualities. Its monuments are pots and platters, and recipes make play-writing easier. How about a monument to those who saved the potato?³²⁹

In the face of Polish historiography's "tragic one-sidedness", Bratkowski aimed to bring historical discourses back to balanced proportions. He betted on the writing of a different, not so frequently told history of Poland in which the narratives of heroic deeds and the "exceptional" are preceded by narratives focused on the daily achievements and constant, silent contributions that make those great events possible. Adam Michnik shared this point of view too when he commented that more "showy" and popular political-military episodes, built upon intense emotions, threatened to overshadow the steady and patient everyday labor that bore crucial socio-economic and cultural improvements:

The profiles of the insurrectionists stimulate the imagination and emotions much more. An attack from the battle of Samosierra [*sic.*]³³⁰ is more photogenic than the tedious organization of education or the modernization of agriculture, not to mention the construction of a network of sanitary facilities. But let us remember that we would not have been able to organize our statehood had it not been for the work done in the spirit of 'organicism' and 'accommodation', especially in Galicia. And let us also remember that our grandfathers often had to pay a high price for their decision to undertake these tasks, risking moral reproach from their antagonists.³³¹

B.3.2) Challenging the dichotomy: redefinition/reinterpretation of concepts and suggestion of alternative chronologies

By questioning in their texts either the meaning of the terms "Idealism" and "Realism" or their time frameworks, critical *inteligencja* drew Positivist and Romantic traditions closer together and proved they were narrowly related in the past, or could be somehow reconciled in the present.

³²⁷ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: "Nie ten poeta, nie ci wierszokleci..." and "Gdzie się podziało nasze 'szalone stulecie'", in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 90-103, 112-113 and 156-186, respectively; also "Dziedzictwo", 235; "Kordian...", 130-131.

³²⁸ Bratkowski: "Najdłuższa wojna...", 260.

³²⁹ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: "Przez krew, łzy i... poczucie humoru", in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 298, my transl.

³³⁰ He refers to the battle of Somosierra (November 30th, 1808), where the French infantry and the Polish light cavalry under Napoleon's command defeated the Spaniards and managed to reach Madrid at the beginning of the Spanish Independence War (1808-1814).

³³¹ Michnik: "Maggots and Angels", 174.

Stefan Bratkowski, for example, pointed out that the Romantic movement represented by the poet Adam Mickiewicz was actually enrooted in the Enlightenment and late eighteenth-century proto-romantic *Sturm-und-Drang*, which had little to do with the reactionary, anti-enlightened and suicidal version Romanticism is usually associated with³³².

While Bratkowski alternatively stressed “romantic” and “positivistic” features in many of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures he portrayed, the author of some of the underground “best-sellers” on Polish Postwar history, Krystyna Kersten, argued that professional historians were conscious of the complementary nature that opposite ways of thinking had, and that national history was the outcome of the apparently incompatible activities of romantics and positivists, socialists and nationalists, supporters of uprisings and of “organic work”, pro-East and pro-West, opportunists and rebellious, those who surrendered and those who never yielded, etc.³³³. Historians, therefore, gave (or should give) priority to a holistic perception of the past over a Manichean one, because they understood that a given tendency simply couldn’t do without its opposite, or claim to be absolutely right at all times.

Close to Kersten’s opinion, Andrzej Micewski thought that, in a broader historical perspective, Romanticism and Realism were not only complementary, but also culturally and politically necessary for the country³³⁴. Adam Bromke had already expressed a very similar view in his 1967 research, when he asserted that

... each of them [idealism and realism in their moderate versions, C.A.] represents values which in the long run are indispensable for the survival of a nation —particularly a nation placed in as difficult a position as Poland. Political idealism emphasizes the need for cultivating the high morale of the people, while political realism stresses the necessity of developing the human and material resources of the country.³³⁵

Or, in Andrzej Kijowski’s words, Polish realists “protected the country against misfortune”, whereas romantics “protected it from death”³³⁶.

In the same line, but going one step further, Tadeusz Łepkowski repeatedly insisted in the 1980s that there had never been a clear-cut separation between Romanticism and Positivism in Polish history. According to him, a single political nation was formed out of the combination of both trends. In some of his texts and speeches, he aimed to define this phenomenon with the self-made terms “Romantivism” (in Polish, “Romantyzm” = Romantyzm + Pozytywizm) and “romantivist” (“romantystyczny” = romantyczny + pozytywistyczny), which he further described as “positivist Romanticism” or, better still, “romantic Positivism”³³⁷.

However, if we take a closer look at each period, the proportion of romantic and realistic elements varied, as Micewski and Łepkowski admitted: when one tradition outstood during a period, and then degenerated or became too extreme, the other inevitably predominated during the next. For instance, according to Łepkowski, between the second half of the eighteenth century until approximately 1815, the ruling

³³² Bratkowski: “Nie ten poeta...”, 97-103.

³³³ KERSTEN, Krystyna: *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Most, 1987 (1985), 9.

³³⁴ MICEWSKI, Andrzej: “O maksymalizmie rzeczywistym i pozornym”, in Micewski: *Polityka...*, 329.

³³⁵ Bromke: *Poland’s Politics...*, 253.

³³⁶ KIJOWSKI, Andrzej: “O wariatach i niewariatach”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4-IX-1977, 8.

³³⁷ ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: “Wstęp”, “Dawne i obecne pojmowanie polskości”, “O polskim charakterze narodowym bez jego definiowania”, in ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: *Uparte trwanie polskości. Nostalgie. Spory. Nadzieje. Wartości*, London/Warszawa, Aneks/MOST/Wydawnictwo Wolne Pismo, 1989, 8, 16, and 41, respectively.

noble elite had a rational, enlightened and reforming spirit, but it eventually began to be contested by Polish Jacobins and Romantics *avant la lettre*. By 1830-1864 the prevalence of Romanticism was a fact, but after the failure of the January Uprising Positivism became the leading trend, until at least the beginning of the twentieth century. This recurrent oscillation made other intellectuals like Marcin Król speak of the incapability of an harmonic co-existence of Romanticism and Realism in nineteenth-century Poland, or conclude that the real debate between Romanticism and Realism shouldn't take place in a general scale (in reference to Polish past in its whole), but in each specific circumstance³³⁸.

In his article "O wariatach i niewariatach" ["On madmen and non-madmen"], Andrzej Kijowski resorted to the original meaning of Realism and Romanticism in history of art to argue that both trends fulfilled a common task: to unveil through literature or painting a reality that was "cursed" or unsightly in the eyes of classicists. Thanks to this, the Poles discovered the political reality of their divided, subjugated and degraded country. In this sense, romantic artists were the main "realists" of their times, because they realized that spiritual life was as actual and powerful as political life and therefore had a more complete perception of reality than others. That's the reason, according to Kijowski, why they believed that conspiracy and uprising was the smallest risk for Polish nation, if compared to the bigger threat of losing their national spiritual identity for good under the government of partitioning powers. Romanticism was therefore pictured by intellectuals as a "realistic" option, sometimes the only possible choice for nineteenth-century Poles to try to change what they perceived as an exceptionally adverse situation in Europe: the division of their territory between three empires. Extreme historical conditions would explain and justify the abundance of "compulsory romantics" (Marcin Król's aforementioned "romantycy z przymuszu") and "dreamers" in Polish society. We can spot analogous comments in Tadeusz Łepkowski's texts, already quoted further above. However, Andrzej Kijowski also pointed out that, contrary to what was thought, non-conformist attitudes were far from being unanimously labelled as "romantic" back then: *radical*, *liberal*, *republican*, or simply *revolutionary* were actually more frequently used adjectives, as was later *socialism*—in clear opposition to PRL's political practice, the author added. In any case, as Micewski and Łepkowski stated, renegade attributes, whether called Romantic or otherwise, would have been preserved up until today and become part of Polish national identity³³⁹.

We have already seen above how Geremek, Micewski or Michnik re-interpreted Realism and distinguished between "legalists", who, at bottom, accepted Poland's submission to other countries, and "authentic" realists, who gave priority to national needs, aspired to an eventual Polish independence and worked to make it real. But they were not the single ones: other re-definition proposals were put forward by some of their colleagues. For example, Stefan Bratkowski, using a similar word game as Kijowski when he said romantics were behaving "realistically" in a long-term perspective, described nineteenth-century entrepreneurs, experts, economists and technicians, like the above-mentioned Piotr Michałowski, as more "mature" romantics, who conceived professional ethics and daily enthusiastic work in industrial and agricultural development as a patriotic service for the Polish nation. In consequence,

³³⁸ Łepkowski: "O polskim charakterze...", 42-44; Micewski: "O maksymalizmie...", 329-330; Michnik: "Maggots and Angels", 173; Król: "Realistyczna...", 1.

³³⁹ Kijowski: "O wariatach...", 8; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 41-42; Łepkowski: "O polskim charakterze...", 42; Król: "Realistyczna...", 1; Micewski: "Polski temat", 336-345; Wereszycki: "Przedmowa", 10.

organic work was not only undertaken by Poles who supported partitions and were ready to accept indefinitely that *statu quo*, but also by those who thought that it was necessary to restore Polish economic and cultural strength first for the nation to survive and be able to carry out successful pro-independence activities. Positivism, Bratkowski explained after a conference, simply was “the Romanticism of patience”³⁴⁰.

Marcin Król, on the other hand, defined nineteenth-century Realism as a “Realism out of terror” (*realizm z przerażenia*), because each wave of organic work came about after an unsuccessful and fiercely repressed uprising. Being basically a radical reaction to a previous radical action and rejecting everything that had to do with Romanticism, Polish Realism was born incomplete, in his opinion. Unlike Łepkowski, Król believed that the vicious circle of romantic-positivist antagonism hadn’t been broken until almost present day. In his appeal to PRL authorities for more social freedom and governmental confidence in its own citizens, he argued that, since the end of the Second World War, Polish society had undergone many changes, gained civic consciousness and displayed a realistic predisposition in practical terms. A few years later, after the Martial Law, Adam Michnik also supported the idea that the Poles were mature enough, and that it was Communist government’s turn to change its ways and make a different move. In contrast to the previous “Realism out of terror”, this more mature attitude was defined by Król as “Realism out of choice” (*realizm z wyboru*), which he believed possible if only authorities trusted society. If there was any difference of positions, the author commented, was between a “closed realism” and an “open realism”, the latter being perhaps even more realistic than the former, because it offered a wider range of choices and stimulated imagination in search of alternatives and creative solutions. What could not be considered realistic, Król said, was the behavior of those who just defended their own interests and perceived any change as a threat to their established social position, in clear reference to Communist *nomenklatura*³⁴¹.

Past antagonisms, Kersten argued, were the result of the clash between two stereotypes which were frequently manipulated by power: that of the insurrectionist, heroic Pole fighting in the barricades and battlefields of the whole world, who suffered the most and shed more blood, only to be paid back with his allies’ betrayal; and that of the moderate, sensible Pole, an “organic worker” engaged in the rebuilding of the country. In her view, rather than becoming more “realistic”, as Król supported, the new generation of Poles had simply rejected this superficial and obsolete comparison and searched for different ways of defining their thought and activities³⁴².

B.3.3) The excesses of both traditions and finding a “middle path” formula. The role of education and social consciousness

The third way to formulate a balanced solution to the idealistic-realistic dilemma was to point up the negative aspects and excesses of both traditions, in order to induce readers to bet on a moderate position and be receptive to eclectic proposals. Adam Bromke even suggested back in the 1960s that Polish society as a whole had a kind of “self-regulating mechanism” which prevented extremist programs from enjoying a wide

³⁴⁰ Bratkowski: “Walka...”, 35, “Kordian...”, 130-155; BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: *Encyklika ‘Laborem exercens’ a nasza dzisiejsza sytuacja*. Łódź, Oficyna Solidarność Walcząca i Świadectwa, 1984, 14.

³⁴¹ Król: “Realistyczna...”, 1-2; MICHNIK, Adam: “Polska wojna”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 12, 1982, 9.

³⁴² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 358, also Łepkowski: “O polskim charakterze...”, 42.

support. Something that, in our opinion, could also be applied to other nations and contexts:

The equilibrium between political idealism and political realism is preserved in a largely self-regulating manner. (...) The shifts from romanticism to positivism take place automatically mainly because when pushed to the extreme both programs are self-defeating. Political idealism which, in order to advance national independence, submits a nation to the peril of biological extinction, and political realism which, in order to promote national survival, exposes a nation to the danger of losing its identity —both of these contradict their own goals. Thus, whenever the exponents of romanticism or positivism go too far in their respective directions, they become subjected to an automatic penalty. The people simply refuse to follow their lead.³⁴³

Some authors, like Andrzej Micewski, Adam Michnik or Stefan Bratkowski considered that, if idealism-Romanticism was taken to extremes, it could lead to political adventurism³⁴⁴ and the loss of talents, or to the damage of democratic spirit. Bratkowski, for instance, regretted how the intellectual potential of gifted youths belonging to the Philomath Society got tragically wasted too early³⁴⁵, as well as of all the Poles who were forced to emigrate due to their participation in different uprisings, not even having the consolation of being remembered by their fellow-countrymen:

... this emigration was the single one that created and managed to preserve its cultural institutions since the fall [of Polish State, C.A.], what's more, it developed and became stronger; it was the single one that run its own higher technical school; the single one that knew how to organize itself during the decades spent abroad. (...)

(...) After every uprising —as a rule, but also in-between—, after every crushed conspiracy, the doors unbolted and we lost the most talented, lively and go-ahead part of our blood. (...)

Maybe this is another way to look at the period of submission, but it's however more respectful with reality. At times when the most gifted French and Germans could work for the technical and economic development of their countries, young Poles went abroad to work for others. And working for others, they even lost the right to have a place in popular memory.³⁴⁶

Much closer to political realism than to idealism, Bratkowski thought it would have been better to be a stereotyped positivist than a stereotyped romantic, because if an initiative led to an upsurge of violence, and was finally repressed and aborted, all efforts would have been in vain, no matter how well-meaning or brilliant the initial idea was.

And despite initial ideas usually had to do with high values and imponderables, the side effects of conspiracy could be, according to Adam Michnik, precisely the opposite: a corruption of moral principles. The peril of conspirators eventually losing touch with social reality and radicalizing their views was high. It was not strange that, after some time gone into hiding, they began to believe themselves superior, despising as “too mild” any other different proposals on how to restore freedom and Polish sovereignty:

The conspirator who perceived conformists as resembling slaves found in himself and his friends the pathos and tragedy of the romantic heroes. Seeing maggots in the cowed population, he ‘angelized’ himself and his friends, fighters for a sovereign and just Poland. The ‘angelic’ character of the picture he had of himself led him —often subconsciously— to assign himself special rights.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Bromke: *Poland's Politics...*, 252-253.

³⁴⁴ Micewski: “O maksymalizmie...”, 329-330.

³⁴⁵ Bratkowski: “Nie ten poeta...”, esp. 117.

³⁴⁶ Bratkowski, “Gdzie się podziało...”, 185-186, my transl.

³⁴⁷ Michnik: “Maggots and Angels”, 194.

Hence, the path towards the destruction of pluralism and equality is built. Conspirators risked becoming a kind of exclusive, too hierarchical sect with a language of its own, that could disregard other points of view and, in fact, any value which was not directly convenient for its purposes:

There is a unique type of activist-conspirator, whose characteristics make him as useful in the underground as they are dangerous later on. Such an activist has to make arbitrary decisions, to distrust newcomers and strangers. A spirit of democracy is not one of the virtues required by a conspiracy; pluralism is not the style favored by it. Underground activity isolates people from the taste and smell of everyday life, skews perspectives, gives birth to dangerous absolutism and intolerance.³⁴⁸

Tadeusz Łepkowski shared similar concerns about excessive idealism. For instance, he hinted that the behavior of some political groups that adopted irrational neo-Romanticism as their creed during the Second World War led to nothing good and that, despite the relevance of Warsaw Uprising's ideological and political content, its failure caused many victims and hardly any practical improvement of Poland's situation³⁴⁹.

Joining the past with present-day problems, Michnik argued that the involvement in opposition politics in a totalitarian dictatorship frequently oscillated between two human motivations: the need to give moral testimony, on one hand, and political calculation, on the other. In putting them together, one part of each was inevitably lost. But since political motivations usually took over any other in clandestine circumstances, Michnik thought it was necessary for a conspiratorial organization to count with morally strong people who were not aiming to become the country's future political elite, and who understood that their political involvement would end once the democratic goal was achieved. Once the country was stabilized, he believed, different qualities would be required for governing, and not the ones acquired in such a special and different context as conspiracy³⁵⁰.

On the other hand, an excess of realism could take to conformism and opportunism³⁵¹. In the past, the mistakes of adopting a too conciliatory attitude involved lowering aspirations and believing that only through surrender and passiveness to the partitioned power some concessions could be attained, whereas Michnik supported that any achievement was only possible through Polish society's autonomous activities and pressure³⁵².

In sum, irredentism should be complemented and balanced with organicism, and vice versa, as Michnik already stressed back in 1975:

Once again an old truth was confirmed: thinking about history is simply part of reflections about the present and the future.

Irredentism that was limited to planning for insurrections and that on principle rejected organic work was tantamount to adventurism. Irredentism that lacked a program of social change, a program for the education of the peasants and the urban poor, had no chance of working effectively for independence. Programs for social struggle which departed from the need to build factories and modernize agriculture, to develop schools and health services, were neglecting important and essential realities and making the struggle for social ideals more difficult to win.

But a program of organic work that abandoned the struggle for an independent Poland and for reform of social relations served as justification for the passivity of conformism. Organicism that limited itself to economic activity or administrative service turned into the ideology of egotistical

³⁴⁸ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 60, also 61.

³⁴⁹ Łepkowski: "O polskim charakterze...", 43.

³⁵⁰ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 62.

³⁵¹ Micewski: "O maksymalizmie...", 330.

³⁵² Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 280.

careerists, who couched their loyalty toward the partitioning power in the cloak of a pseudopatriotic philosophy of history.³⁵³

Given the risks and flaws of each tradition if interpreted too exclusively or literally, most opposition *inteligenci* bet on a hybrid solution consisting of an idealistic theory and a realistic practice.

First of all, core values and imponderables should never be denied, no matter what the context or the circumstances were, as we have already seen when dealing with Romantic trends alone. *Inteligenci* considered that one must not experiment with principles: they should be transmitted through traditions and always be the result of knowledge and historical experience. They were, in sum, the spiritual basis of a community³⁵⁴. Therefore, a nation couldn't actually exist without imponderables, as Michnik said back in the early 1970s:

A nation that lives without the essentials, that forgoes the defense of things that are sometimes elusive and indefinable, thereby renounces its own culture, retreating to the level of a tribe. Realism and readiness to make concessions can be virtues in a politician, but they are virtues that must be closely watched.³⁵⁵

In this text, Michnik expressed his admiration for one of the most important figures of the Polish twentieth century: Marshall Józef Piłsudski, and inspired himself in his thought to stress the importance of never giving up imponderables and fighting for them when they are in jeopardy:

Piłsudski educated with newspapers, books, and above all by action. Acquiescence to servitude, he told us, must never be permitted. We are not allowed to remain silent when our fundamental values are being violated. To give up those imponderables is to give up cultural identity, to consent to cultural annihilation.³⁵⁶

For Michnik, to recover lost sovereignty and independence in Poland were targets which must never be given up but, at the same time, new methods must be found to achieve them³⁵⁷.

Tadeusz Łepkowski, on the other hand, spotted in Polish twentieth-century history two examples of "Romantivism", that is, of successful (albeit ephemeral) balance between idealism and realism. Firstly, before and during the recovery of statehood (1905-1921), Polish pro-independence political groups displayed all their ability to benefit from a favorable international context in order to attain their national goals. They negotiated politically in different international meetings and, simultaneously, established some "red lines" by also putting forward what they understood as non-negotiable demands. Secondly, after a period of prevalence of rational and positivist contents, Romanticism bloomed once again with the August 1980 revolution and the creation of *Solidarność*, settling a kind of balance. However, soon romantic trends strengthened much more and became dangerously predominant after the establishment of Martial Law³⁵⁸.

³⁵³ Michnik, "The Dispute...", 248.

³⁵⁴ Micewski: "O maksymalizmie...", 330-332; Micewski: "Polski temat", 341; Król: "Realistyczna...", 2.

³⁵⁵ MICHNIK, Adam: "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", in Michnik: *Letters from Prison*..., 209.

³⁵⁶ Michnik, "Shadows of Forgotten...", 211.

³⁵⁷ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 280.

³⁵⁸ Łepkowski: "O polskim charakterze...", 43.

Adam Michnik shared a similar opinion to Łepkowski's when he remarked that, in his view, the antagonistic clash between idealism and realism was overcome in the turn of the nineteenth century. In a new time and a different context, new questions arose for a younger generation to answer them: "The dualism of romanticism versus positivism was ingrained in Polish political thought, and the alternatives of armed insurrection versus organic work a part of Polish practice. It was absolutely necessary to overcome these alternatives in order to create a new style of political thinking"³⁵⁹.

Despite having different perceptions of Poland's needs, priorities and international situation, besides serious flaws and hardly desirable views in some crucial issues, both Polish socialists and national democrats, who would be so relevant in the Second Republic period (1919-1939), betted on an independent country and the building of social self-determination, rejecting passivity and conciliation policies. This common substratum was, according to Michnik, what made the members of both political parties take part in the demonstration commemorating the national patriot Jan Kiliński (1760-1819), who participated in Kościuszko's uprising in 1794, during the latter's 100th anniversary (Warsaw, April 17th 1894). They all shared, in other words, the same past references and turned to them in search of inspiration, besides appealing to national feelings and traditions³⁶⁰. A selection and blend of the best and most outstanding ones was a natural (besides sensible) reaction to previous antagonisms, that finally gave birth to new proposals. This took place at the end of the nineteenth century, but could also happen again now³⁶¹:

Do we not often argue about the past, thinking that we are arguing about the truths of the present? Is it not the case that out of the melting pot of the past, new programs, new ideologies, new expressions of old conflicts are bound to emerge? **Is it not the case that the plans which are being made today for a self-governing republic must be a synthesis of the motifs that clashed yesterday and could not be reconciled, but which today are complementary and natural allies, mutually enriching each other?**

I believe this is exactly the case today.³⁶²

In the same line, Andrzej Micewski's balanced formula consisted of combining idealistic or even maximalist goals with realistic methods that bore in mind each circumstance. He believed, together with Michnik and Łepkowski, that idealism or Romanticism did not necessarily entail armed actions: they could also have a peaceful and constructive output in accordance to present demands. There was room for brave Romanticism, albeit not risky; ready for pragmatic calculations, but without forgetting values and, in extreme case, ready also for sacrifice. Compromises must be reached, but always within the framework of the ideals of a community³⁶³. Opposition initiatives required this balanced formula, and balanced, ethical persons to carry it out in order to prosper:

³⁵⁹ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 278-279.

³⁶⁰ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 280, 290, 313-317.

³⁶¹ That is what Irving Howe thinks Michnik is actually trying to do with socialist and national democratic traditions too, because, of course, their new political proposals also generated new antagonisms and different perceptions of politics: Howe: "The Polish Resistance"; Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 304-313.

³⁶² Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 333, bold mine.

³⁶³ MICEWSKI, Andrzej: "W przeszłość, czy w przyszłość?", in Micewski: *Polityka...*, 407-408 and 414-415; Micewski: "Naród i państwo", 1; Micewski: "O maksymalizmie...", 335; Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 10-15; Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 82-84; Łepkowski: "O polskim charakterze...", 43-44.

If both the insurrectionists and the organicists are necessary, then we need people who are organicists in form and insurrectionists in substance. We need people who do not lie publicly, whom we can trust, who reject compromise with the system of government that has been imposed on this nation —yet who do not ask for rash actions, call for terrorism, or organize urban or rural guerrillas. In other words, the classic dilemma can be described as grass-roots activity versus collaboration, not just as grass-roots activity versus insurrection.³⁶⁴

Those *inteligenci* who were more partial to idealistic traditions within their conciliatory proposals also argued that romantics, far from not taking reality on account, were actually one or several steps ahead of realists, for they had more visionary capacities³⁶⁵. Kijowski explained it this way:

Who did history prove right [idealists or realists, C.A.]?

Both of them. *Bien pensants* made less practical mistakes, however “madmen” foresaw the future accurately. The former were mainly right at the moment, immediately, the latter along the centuries.³⁶⁶

For Adam Michnik, as we have seen, the “ideal *intelligent*-opponentist” would respect national imponderables and behave realistically in practice. But it was also essential for him (or her) to search for support and lessons in the past and establish a connection between former struggles and his/her own, creating a sense of continuity between previous traditions and the ones being forged now:

A realist is not a person who simply understands the ineffectiveness of insurrectionist activity but rather one who is able **to analyze the causes of the defeats of national uprisings, to inscribe the achievements of past freedom fighters in the ethical and political consciousness of his contemporaries, and to build of those actions a living tradition and a weapon more effective than the rebel’s double-barreled gun.** The realist must understand that the need for national and civic liberty, inherent in the human soul, is no less real than the realities of jail and foreign domination.³⁶⁷

The immaterial “weapon” Michnik spoke about was based primarily in memory and historical consciousness, and the most efficient and peaceful way to provide the Poles with it was through education.

Polish *inteligencja* had always played a leading role in this educational task. For instance, historians like Wereszycki or Łepkowski highlighted that, along the nineteenth century, *inteligenci* forged a feeling of national duty that wasn’t limited anymore to the noble elite, but spread to workers and peasantry too. The first wave promoting national consciousness was a more “romantic” one, based on armed fights, but after 1863-1864 it turned more positivistic through the idea of “work on the foundations” (*praca u podstaw*). According to this view, the spirit of *inteligencja*, regarded as Polish national spirit, was “democratized” back then thanks to the initiatives of *inteligenci* themselves, similarly to Prometheus’ feat when he handed fire to humankind. So, in a way, these authors suggest that the core of Polish national feeling, of the Poles’ patriotism, emanated from an *intelligencki* ethos combining realistic and idealistic elements. Though it seems it was always the latter which prevailed: “Polish *inteligenci*”, Łepkowski said, “co-created people’s and workers’ movement, brought national consciousness to working class movements, a specific fondness for freedom, idealistic altruism,

³⁶⁴ Michnik: “Why You Are Not Signing...”, 12-13.

³⁶⁵ Micewski: “Polski temat”, 338.

³⁶⁶ Kijowski: “O wariatach...”, 8.

³⁶⁷ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 279-280, bold mine.

rebelliousness and a spirit of opposition against power”³⁶⁸. We find analogous comments in Łepkowski’s work *Polska-losy państwa i narodu* (1992), which was prepared between 1987-1989 (that is, until the author’s death) and was accepted by the Polish Ministry of Education in 1991 as a textbook for high school students³⁶⁹. Janusz Kuczynski points up the positive general assessment Łepkowski made of Polish 1864-1905 period, as well as his conciliatory spirit:

Łepkowski’s history-writing represented another non-Marxist presentation of the Positivist thought. Positivism was looked at withing (*sic*) the framework of a larger, political transformation of primary importance lasting for four decades. The process of the building up of a national conscience and the disseminating of it to new social layers finally led to the restitution of Polish national independence, in Łepkowski’s view.

Łepkowski deliberately seemed to avoid emphasizing conflict and strife in the Polish society of the Positivist period. In his opinion even those involved in conspiracy, those of an activist attitude accepted resistance without violence as their option. On the other hand, as time passed, the Positivists often began to admire in their hearts Romantic and Insurrectionist ideals.³⁷⁰

According to some oppositionists, such as the members of the Society of Scientific Courses (Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych, TKN)³⁷¹, education had always been a pending matter in Polish lands, especially in Partition times. Precisely to make up for these deficiencies and to provide alternative, uncensored knowledge, independent educational associations, such as TKN itself, have been set up continuously, becoming part of Poland’s most cherished patrimony:

The inadequacy of official education and the political and ideological limitations imposed to free science are known and have been criticized for centuries. Aiming to correct this, societies have created and still create institutions, together with forms of teaching and of self-education, beyond the official educational systems. Similarly, Polish history counts on that score with the wonderful traditions of many education associations: the ‘flying university’ [Uniwersytet Latający], the ‘vademecum for autodidacts’ [poradnik dla samouków] or the ‘Free Polish University’ [Wolna Wszechnica Polska] in the Interwar period.³⁷²

It is also significant that some Polish educational initiatives in the 1970s took their names from previous ones, dating back to Partition period: the first (aforementioned) “Flying University” was founded in 1885 and initially provided higher education for women, who weren’t allowed to study at universities, in a clandestine way. Courses of social sciences, philology and history, pedagogy, mathematics and natural sciences, lasting up to 5-6 years, were taken by students (among them Maria Skłodowska, later known as Marie Curie) in private homes in Warsaw. In 1905, the association began to carry out its activities openly and changed its name for Society of Scientific Courses, from which PRL times’ TKN also took its name. It was characteristic of all of these educational associations not to have a fixed location for their courses, in order not to be tracked down and dismantled by the police.

³⁶⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 32, also Wereszycki: “Przedmowa”, 9.

³⁶⁹ SAMSONOWICZ, Henryk *et al.*: *Polska — losy państwa i narodu*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1992.

³⁷⁰ Kuczynski: *The Changing picture...*, 96, also 94-95. Łepkowski considered that Positivism never departed completely from Romanticism. Similar thoughts in Walicki: *Philosophy and Romantic...*, 337-357.

³⁷¹ On this initiative: TERLECKI, Ryszard: *Uniwersytet latający i Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych, 1977-1981*, Kraków/ Rzesów, Instytut Europejskich Studiów Społecznych/ Poligrafia Wyższego Seminarium Duchownego, 2000.

³⁷² “Declaracja TKN”, *Tygodnik Solidarność*, 17, 24-VII-1981 (22-I-1978), 8, my transl.

In his *felietony* devoted to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures, Stefan Bratkowski also stressed the importance of educational reforms and initiatives along Polish history. We have already mentioned some of them, like Stanisław Konarski's or Staszic's³⁷³. Another outstanding case commented by this author is that of Walenty Stefański (1813-1877), founder of the Związek Plebejuszy³⁷⁴, who introduced the lower classes of Poznań region into politics and contributed to the blooming of Polish patriotism in the Western borders³⁷⁵.

In his reflections about Polish socialists and national democrats, Adam Michnik was interested in National Democracy's activism, because its goal was to build independent social life both through legal and illegal methods, the latter including self-education circles, educational activities and the distribution of forbidden writings and independent publications. It was a way to prepare society for independence, once there was a favorable chance to recover it, for it was better to make a long term investment than run the risk with a short-term upheaval, less solid and planned, that would entail worse consequences. "In this conception", Michnik remarked, "the fight for independence ceased to be a one-time act (armed uprising, for example) and became a process of change planned over a period of years"³⁷⁶. Thus, regarding the present, the differences between traditions, as well as the achievement of their targets, should also be channeled through education and have primarily an educational meaning³⁷⁷.

B.4) Inteligencja and Edward Abramowski's precedent

In their determination to dig up past theories, methods and tactics that could be valid for opposition programs today, *inteligenci* didn't limit themselves to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century idealistic and realistic traditions, nor to the most outstanding turn-of-the-century political trends, that can be considered "triumphant", albeit short-lived, in the period of the Second Republic (Piłsudski's socialist current, Dmowski's *endecja*, besides Witos' Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Piast"/ Stronnictwo Ludowe)³⁷⁸. There was also room for the re-interpretation of less-known or less politically fortunate proposals of that time. We are going to focus here on a single case: that of Edward Abramowski, due to its intrinsic importance in the Polish context and to the way it incarnates some of Walter Benjamin's guidelines.

³⁷³ Bratkowski: "Walka..."; "Bóg mu powierzył...".

³⁷⁴ Stefański was a political activist, bookseller, publisher and co-founder of the Polish League (Liga Polska). In the 1848 uprising he supported autonomy for the region of Greater Poland against Prussia. Before this, in 1842, he founded in Poznań the Związek Plebejuszy, an association of craftsmen, apprentices and youngsters that promoted an uprising of the people, the abolition of social strata and private property and a fair distribution of goods.

³⁷⁵ Bratkowski: "Najdłuższa wojna...", 264-265.

³⁷⁶ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 287, also 278 and 285. The same arguments can be found in Bratkowski: "Najdłuższa wojna..." and Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe (PPN): "Polska i Europa (materiał Zespołu Problemowego PPN)", in *Polskie wizje Europy w XIX i XX wieku* (wyb. Peter Oliver Loew), Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004 (November 1979), 199-200.

³⁷⁷ Micewski: "Polski temat", 343-344.

³⁷⁸ This "success", as we say, can be considered only brief and relative from contemporary opposition *inteligencja*'s point of view, and in general from a democrat's view as well. The failure was, in this case, both internal and external. Internally, many national democrats' ideas became increasingly xenophobic and anti-Semitic, in part due to the fascination fascist regimes exerted on some circles of Polish population. On the other hand, Polish democracy degenerated into an authoritarian system after Piłsudski's May coup and the establishment of the Sanation regime (1926-1939). Externally, the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the subsequent beginning of the Second World War made the Polish Republic disintegrate once again, besides changing its borders in the late 1940s.

Edward Abramowski (1868-1918) was a Polish masonic thinker, philosopher, sociologist and psychologist who underwent an interesting political evolution in his life. He was born in Stefaninie (nowadays in the Ukraine) within a well-off family of landowners and, after the death of his mother, he moved with his father and elder sister to Warsaw (1879). He was raised up in a Romantic atmosphere, where the memory of uprisings was still fresh. Instead of attending regular schools, he had a series of private teachers, including prominent intellectuals of the time such as Maria Konopnicka (1842-1910)³⁷⁹. Through her, he had the chance to meet the members of the I Proletariat³⁸⁰ Zygmunt Pietkiewicz and Konrad Prószyński.

In his youth, Abramowski familiarized himself with positivist literature and with the works of Spencer, Marx and Darwin. In his early articles “Pogadanki o rzeczach pożytecznych” (1883) [“Talks on useful things”] and “Pogadanki z gospodarstwa społecznego” (1884) [“Talks of social economy”] he unfolded his first ideas on poverty, social education, mutual help, cooperation and, especially, on human fraternity.

In Cracow’s Jagiellonian University, where he studied in 1885, he got in touch with circles of socialist youths and collaborated in the smuggling of illegal foreign literature. Between 1886 and 1889 he studied Philosophy at Geneva University and got involved in political agitation as an activist of the Polish students’ association Zjednoczenia Młodzieży Polskiej. He also had contact with revolutionary groups in Poland and taught workers.

Once he returned to Warsaw, he devoted himself to *publicystyka* and to the II Proletariat. In his articles, he made a critical Marxist approach to capitalism, he identified private property as the source of oppression and betted on a social revolution to change things. Due to his opposition to resort to terror as a political weapon, Abramowski quitted the II Proletariat and founded the organization Zjednoczenie Robotnicze, focused on propaganda and educational activities for workers. In November 1892, he participated in the meeting of Polish socialists held in Paris where the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was created, and was appointed to direct the new Związek Zagraniczny Socjalistów Polskich, in charge of PPS’ publications and foreign relations.

Later on in that decade, and seriously ill, Abramowski gave up his political activities and travelled to Switzerland to heal himself. There, he studied Psychology and Sociology, and eventually distanced himself from orthodox Marxism and the workers’ movement, evolving towards anarchist postulates. His new, personal theory of socialism regarded the State and State-controlled institutions as something essentially negative. In connection to Lev Tolstoi’s ideas, Abramowski’s new ethical proposal stressed that, in order to carry out the desired social changes, a previous moral transformation was needed among the people. He was a close friend of the writer Stefan Żeromski, who also insisted on the need of (re)introducing morality in public and everyday life.

Back in Warsaw at the beginning of 1897, he primarily devoted himself to develop and spread his new ideas through texts such as *Zagadnienia socjalizmu* [The problems of socialism], *Pierwiastki indywidualne w socjologii* [Individual elements in sociology], *Program wykładów nowej etyki* [Program of conferences of the new ethics] or *Etyka a*

³⁷⁹ Maria Konopnicka was one of the most famous Polish poets of the second half of the nineteenth century, plus an activist for women’s rights and Polish independence. She also wrote novels (eg. dealing with poverty and the abuses against peasants, workers or Polish Jews), short stories, children’s literature and *publicystyka*.

³⁸⁰ The International Social-Revolutionary Party Proletariat, also known as I Proletariat (1882-1886), was the first Polish workers’ party based on Marxist principles. Its leaders were repressed by tsarist authorities. The II Proletariat (1889-1893) resumed the ideology, goals and strategies of the previous party: fight for workers’ rights, take the means of production into public ownership and eventually create a workers’ state through conspiracy, distribution of publications, strikes, demonstrations and terror.

rewolucja [Ethics and revolution]. Besides giving priority to moral revolution over social revolution, in these works he highlighted the importance of cooperation and self-organization within a society. In 1898-1900 he got involved in self-educational circles and clandestine courses to spread independent education and pro-independence ideas. He promoted groups based on ethical principles that demanded a moral renovation, and also became interested in Psychology.

Despite harshly criticizing the Church and religion as institutions, Abramowski understood Christianity as a social and moral expression of human rights and freedoms, as well as an ideology sponsoring equality, love and fraternity. Hence, in his view, the Ten Commandments were the most revolutionary manifesto for a better life, grounded on the above-mentioned values.

In 1904, Abramowski published his dissertation *Socjalizm a państwo* [Socialism and the State], where he criticized the State, state socialism and the idea of creating a “dictatorship of the proletariat”. According to his theses, the bases of a society should be free, autonomous and creative individuals who freely decide to form non-State associations in order to organize themselves as a group. After the failure of the 1905 revolution in the Russian empire, he focused on the idea of cooperation in his works *Zasada republiki kooperatywne* [Principles of a cooperative republic], *Znaczenie współdzielczości dla demokracji* [The meaning of collaboration for democracy], *Idee społeczne kooperatywności* [Social ideas of the cooperative movement] and *Kooperatywa jako sprawa wyzwolenia ludu pracującego* [The cooperative as the liberation of the workers]. Abramowski wanted the tsarist State to be gradually and peacefully replaced by cooperatives. These cooperatives would be formed out of free will by individuals who consciously engaged in social life and fulfilled their duties responsibly. Freedom, solidarity and fraternity would be key elements in his project of a new socialist system without a State. Along this period, he co-founded the magazine *Spółem* and continued with his ethical proposals.

In his late years, Abramowski concentrated in psychological praxis and studies. In 1917 he began to deliver lectures on metaphysics at Warsaw University, where he held a chair in Psychology since 1915. His health worsened along this time and, finally, he died in June 1918.

Polish opposition *inteligenci* in the 1970s and 1980s tended to highlight three aspects or ideas of Edward Abramowski’s life and thought: society’s self-organization, moral values, such as fraternity or solidarity, and the reduction, or eventual disappearance, of State power. The journalist Wojciech Giełżyński (n. 1930), who quitted the magazine *Polityka* during the Gdańsk strikes in 1980 and finally returned his PZPR membership card after the establishment of Martial Law, devoted a book to Abramowski in the mid-1980s. The opening quote of the work, located in the inner cover, was extracted from one of the thinker’s texts:

A nation’s strength and individual freedom rests on associations. Where associations are multiple and varied, human life is free of police administration, and every governmental attack against freedom encounters invincible resistance. On the other hand, where there are no associations, the police rules with omnipotence, manages and governs over everything and doesn’t pay attention to the different needs and interests of the inhabitants. Non-associated people cannot oppose to any governmental violence, they are dependent of it.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ GIEŁŻYŃSKI, Wojciech: *Edward Abramowski. Zwiastun “Solidarności”*, London, Polonia, 1986, quoting Abramowski, my transl.

Abramowski's proposals were never supported by a majority during his life and, after his death, at the dawn of Poland's rebirth as a State, they simply seemed to fade away. On the contrary, other pro-independence political currents that Abramowski had alerted against, because he saw in them manifest or underlying pre-totalitarian habits (especially Dmowski's and Piłsudski's), flourished and took the lead since the end of the nineteenth century, becoming in the interwar period the most popular among the Poles³⁸². Thus, not only were Abramowski's socio-political ideas "swept away" by others that achieved a broader national approval: they also foretold some of the evils that would shortly threaten Poland, as well as other parts of the world.

Due to his heterodox left-wing approach to socio-economic and political reality, to the priority of ethics and the importance given to each individual within society, as well as to his (also heterodox) closeness to religious and spiritual thought, the figure of Abramowski curiously resembles, in general lines, that of Walter Benjamin. They also shared similar concerns and immediate fate: let us remember that, a couple of decades after the Polish thinker's death, Benjamin's warnings against the perversions of progress and its already full-fledged consequences (Nazi, Fascist and Communist totalitarian systems) also fell into general oblivion for some time, in the aftermath of the Second World War, only to be rediscovered and re-interpreted afterwards.

Years before the October Revolution, Abramowski criticized the totalitarian drift he perceived in Polish socialist thought and, according to Giełżyński, predicted the ordeals people would endure in a totalitarian bureaucratic State hidden behind the mask of socialist principles. In other words, he foresaw, as a kind of "Cassandra of modernity", the eventual establishment of actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe³⁸³.

Adam Michnik admitted that, from today's perspective, one may spot a pre-totalitarian seed, as well as traces of Russian authoritarianism, in both Dmowski's right-winged nationalist program and Piłsudski's socialist party, since they were inevitably influenced by the context in which they were forged. The national self-determination these movements sought had to be implemented, or even imposed, from above. This demanded military virtues like hierarchical organization, obedience and self-sacrifice, rather than those pursued by a democratic community, such as pluralism and tolerance. On the other hand, he remarked, Edward Abramowski had warned against political groups whose major goal was to attain power and control the State institutions. Michnik considered that Abramowski's plan to achieve self-determination was opposite to Piłsudski's and Dmowski's, but also partially complementary, especially in terms of strategy (creation of associations beyond the State's reach, awakening of social consciousness). The main danger for the former lay in the State itself: the elites that attained State power would use it to defend their new privileges and properties. Sooner or later, they would rule just for themselves and manipulate the masses, so that the preached revolution would become a mere substitution of one elite for another in a still oppressive system for the working class.

Instead of the typically State-sponsored political organizations, education, courts, police and military forces, Abramowski suggested that people should organize themselves in cooperatives and independent institutions to promote different forms of management, work ethics and moral values. He supported that the successful building of a free, self-determined and conscious society could only start from below and by boycotting the coercive State, because "in the very process of struggling with the

³⁸² GEREMEK, Bronisław: "Dwa narody", *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 25, 1987, 11; Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 303, 314-317.

³⁸³ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 303; Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 5.

partitioning power” it would be “possible to construct social mechanisms based on solidarity and ties of friendship”. Michnik wanted to highlight, in other words, that for Abramowski the methods and means had a crucial influence in the goals and in the shape political change would finally acquire. Changes should not come from above (the State system) or, following the Leninist model, through an elite of “professional revolutionaries” (“bureaucratic revolution”), but through the workers themselves, who should cease to be political objects to become political subjects-agents out of their own free will: “In order to be able to govern, the workers must gain experience in the course of the struggle for power. Only during this struggle can they learn about self-organization, attain a political self-awareness, and understand the nature of their most important weapon —worker solidarity.”³⁸⁴

Michnik further described Abramowski’s ideas as “a program of national rebirth and liberation”³⁸⁵. However, Abramowski would have probably removed the adjective “national” from the sentence, for, in line with his anarchist and socialist philosophy, he was quite critical with patriotism and the idea of nation, though it is also true that he engaged in Polish pro-independence activities during his years in Warsaw. Bronisław Geremek, on the other hand, stuck more to Abramowski’s words when he connected the latter’s philosophy with his own apprehension towards the State³⁸⁶. In a speech delivered in Warsaw’s French Institute in November 1986, Geremek said that, for Abramowski, “state socialism” was an obstacle for universal morality and could lead to the omnipotence of bureaucracy and police and the subsequent submission of a person’s individuality. He softened, nevertheless, part of his message by asserting that his guidelines for democratic politics involved limiting State power, rather than making it completely disappear. His ideas, Geremek asserted, were far from destructive anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism. Their goal was to make a political subject-agent out of individuals, who should become citizens, and hence out of society, which should transform into a civil society. The way to fulfill society’s political *podmiotowość*³⁸⁷ would be for people to associate voluntarily and due to common interests, as the co-owners and rulers of the “common good”. Geremek drew from Abramowski a clear lesson for Polish present circumstances: the more democratic and independent a government was, the easier it would accept society’s sovereignty and independence; and, in parallel, self-organization of society would limit the State’s meddling in individuals’ lives and frustrate its potential “totalitarian temptation”³⁸⁸.

Therefore, Geremek believed, together with Michnik, that Abramowski’s thoughts sounded contemporary not only regarding his worries, but also his hopes. Wojciech Giełżyński also agreed with this, but he took it even much further semantically and spiritually speaking, for, whilst Geremek considered that Abramowski’s model, together

³⁸⁴ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 301, 314-316, quotations from 302-303 and 300, respectively, also Michnik: “Powstanie listopadowe...”, 86.

³⁸⁵ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 316.

³⁸⁶ See Geremek’s case study at the end of this chapter.

³⁸⁷ *Podmiotowość* may be translated as “subjectivity” or the quality of being a political and historical “subject”. I use the word “subject” here understood as a *grammatical* subject: the individual or collective who executes an action, and not as a “vassal” or “subordinate” to an authority. Given that “subject” in English has curiously this double, contradictory meaning (see also Stráth: “Introduction...”, 23, mentioning Voglis), besides multiple others, I will use the Polish term *podmiotowość* when referring to this condition, attribute or capability of “being a subject who acts”, the expression “subject-agent” or “agency”, in order to avoid misunderstandings.

³⁸⁸ Geremek: “Dwa narody”, 11 and 6. There was a printing mistake in Geremek’s article concerning page order, so the right reading order goes: 5, 9, 10, 11, 6.

with Stanisław Ossowski's (1897-1963)³⁸⁹, was never materialized in Poland, though it was within reach in 1980-1981 through *Solidarność*³⁹⁰, Giełżyński thought that Abramowski actually *resurrected* three times after his death. Of course, the journalist meant that the social and philosophical principles he quoted from Abramowski at the beginning of his book had re-emerged and/or been put into practice on at least three different occasions in Polish twentieth-century history, but it is nevertheless very significant the way he used verbs like *odżyć* or *zmartwychwstać*³⁹¹ to express this, because it connects directly with Benjamin's philosophical-messianic ideas about the rebirth of the defeated through remembrance, and the key role played by hope in the process. Giełżyński put it specifically in this way:

Abramowski is reborn when people have hope; when they dream about renovating society according to principles they agree with, and not following imposed laws.

When the State becomes the Monster that was so graphically described by Abramowski, he dies, he falls into oblivion — only to resurrect when something dawns.³⁹²

The first time Abramowski was brought back to life, according to Giełżyński, was not long after his death, when the Poles recovered their statehood. It was a period in which society had to learn many things in a very short time, including all kinds of democratic procedures, but citizen initiatives soon multiplied and prospered despite the country's many pending issues and poorness. However, these efforts were ill-fated after the State apparatus increased its power and control over people in the Sanation regime, and were completely destroyed with the beginning of the Second World War.

The second time Abramowski's spirit returned was right after the disasters of the War and the Nazi invasion, in 1945-1947, when there was still an atmosphere of expectation in Poland and the majority of society didn't conceive a permanent Communist monopoly of power. The Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe)³⁹³ was broadly supported and Stanisław Mikołajczyk³⁹⁴ had returned to Poland, so it was yet a moment of hope. Some parts of the PSL program, Giełżyński believed, reminded of Abramowski's theses, and his humanistic socialism was also present in a few circles of the Polish Socialist Party. In the mid-1940s, the socialist sociologist Jan Strzelecki (1919-1988) reflected on fraternity, dignity and human identity in his work *O socjalizmie humanistycznym* [*On socialist humanism*] (1946) following both Abramowski and his teacher Ossowski. Just like his predecessors, he

³⁸⁹ Stanisław Ossowski was a Polish social philosopher and sociologist. He first studied Philosophy at Warsaw University, then continued his higher education Paris, Rome and London. Back in Poland, he studied Sociology in an underground university during the Second World War. He was professor at Łódź University (1945-1947) and Warsaw University (1947-1963). He worked on the idea of social consciousness and refuted the basic Marxist thesis about Communism being a superior socio-economic stage than capitalism. In 1951 he was fired from his post in the UW due to political reasons, but was readmitted after the "thaw" of October 1956. Supporter of humanist positions, he was one of the most outstanding intellectual and moral figures of postwar Poland.

³⁹⁰ Geremek: "Dwa narody", 11 and 6.

³⁹¹ That is, to be reborn, to resurrect, to be brought back to life.

³⁹² Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 135.

³⁹³ The Stronnictwo Ludowe (SL), an agrarian populist party, was the outcome of the union in 1931 of former Polish People's Party "Piast", Polish People's Party "Wyzwolenie" and Peasants' Party. After the Second World War it changed its name back to PSL.

³⁹⁴ Member and later leader of the People's Party in the interwar period, Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile during World War II and Deputy Prime Minister in postwar times representing PSL, before the Communist Party took complete political control of Poland.

envisaged a social organization based on ethics³⁹⁵. However, by 1948 the Communist party had eliminated its political adversaries and taken absolute control of the State with the aid of fake elections. The Stalinist era had begun, and with it the successive waves of repression that destroyed society's independence and self-governing elements. Except for some occasional references within the Club of the Crooked Circle (Klub Krzywego Koła)³⁹⁶, Abramowski had perished again.

Up to now, two attempts: two failures. But what about the third "resurrection"?

According to Giełżyński, the next "return" of Abramowski's theses came more than thirty years later with the creation of *Solidarność*, hence the title of his work: *Edward Abramowski. Zwiastun "Solidarności"* [Edward Abramowski. The herald of "Solidarność"]. In his view, *Solidarność* was a heterogeneous association combining a Catholic basis with nuclei of humanistic socialism and anarcho-syndicalism. Soon after its formation, some of its leaders and counselors began to refer to Abramowski as an inspiration. Even the very name of "Solidarity", coined by the prominent dissident Karol Modzelewski (n.1937)³⁹⁷, has its roots in these philosophical traditions. Together, all of these trends permitted in 1980-1981 the rebirth of free political thought in a massive scale, the recovery of social *podmiotowość* and of national aspirations. In other words, the pre-eminence of moral values, self-organization and the reduction of State power that Abramowski imagined more than eight decades before as the cornerstones of a free society, had finally materialized in *Solidarność*. Despite Communist government's attempts to dismantle this initiative, Giełżyński described it as "still ongoing", for not even the Martial Law managed to put an end to Polish society's demands. Therefore, contrary to the two previous attempts, the third one, in spite of everything, had managed to triumph³⁹⁸.

But it is not a question of applying all of Abramowski's theories today, Giełżyński said. In the first place, many of their aspects are simply obsolete; and, in the second place, one must bear in mind that any ideology, when put into practice, experiences some "erosion" and hardly keeps up with the constant changes occurring in a community. What he betted on in his work was the retrieval of the "wise" and "right" (*trafne* in Polish) ideas of Abramowski, not the "failed" ones. But how to tell which were "right" and which are "wrong"? Despite not being excessively clear in this point, it seemed that, for Giełżyński, the main criterion to select the "debris" from the "rubbish dump of history" was determined, as in Walter Benjamin's case, by today's ethical needs. He believed that some of Abramowski's moral and philosophical proposals, as well as his suggestions to transform the political system (all of which have been mentioned before), were surprisingly innovative and up-to-date. So why not perform, in Benjamin's words, a "tiger's leap into the past" and bring them to present time?³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ Strzelecki would later on develop opposition activities (Club of the Crooked Circle, lecturer for the Society of Scientific Courses, co-author of Doświadczenie i Przyszłość's reports, *Solidarność* adviser).

³⁹⁶ Freethinking debate club founded in Warsaw (1955-1962). Its members dealt with political, cultural, philosophical and artistic problems. Among its participants: Leszek Kołakowski, Antoni Słonimski, Władysław Bartoszewski, Jacek Kuroń, Jan Józef Lipski, Stefan Kiselewski, Jakub Karpiński, Adam Michnik or Karol Modzelewski.

³⁹⁷ See *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1 and Modzelewski's interview with Magdalena Bajer: "Żyję w historii. Rozmowa z profesorem Karolem Modzelewskim", in BAJER, Magdalena: *Blizny po ukąszeniu*, Warszawa, Biblioteka "Więzi", 2005, 118-139.

³⁹⁸ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 135-138. See Chapter 2 for more on Martial Law's failure.

³⁹⁹ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 138-139.

This is exactly what he thought Władysław Frasyniuk⁴⁰⁰ achieved with his program to organize social forces, published in *Tygodnik Mazowsze* in January 1985⁴⁰¹. In it, Giełżyński asserted, Frasyniuk had managed to adapt the essence of Abramowski's philosophical work *Zmowa powszechna przeciw rządowi* [Universal conspiracy against the government] (1905) to today's political conditions. It combined long-term goals (workers' self-government, formation of co-operatives, self-training, fight for the right to vote in democratic conditions), with short-term demands and partial targets that workers must continuously defend against the Communist government, such as a minimum income to compensate for price increases, free Saturdays, the right to strike, provide defense against wrongful dismissals of companions and protection against police violence (register abuses, make them public, take them to the courts...), carry out peaceful demonstrations or write up collective requests. Frasyniuk's proposals were realistic and practical: without looking for quick and showy results, they encouraged large- and small-scale non-violent activism not only to restrain everyday governmental abuse of power, but also to eventually create an autonomous society in Poland⁴⁰².

Wojciech Giełżyński also referred in his work to other intellectuals who had recently stressed the importance of Edward Abramowski and shared similar opinions about him. For example, the oppositionist Leszek Szaruga⁴⁰³, in his underground essay *Szkoła polska* [Polish school]⁴⁰⁴, saw Abramowski as the unfairly forgotten "signpost" of Polish contemporary thought because, despite his work was remarkable for its independence and imagination, it had always been underestimated or despised by the left. Today, rather than promoting a direct application of his ideas, the figure of Abramowski could be "recovered", firstly, to make people realize that Polish consciousness is dominated by a single political branch of the left, and, secondly, to encourage the re-construction of the rest of the branches in order to make more conscious choices. On the other hand, professor Ryszard Paradowski argued against Ruta Światło's proposal of forgetting Abramowski (since, according to her, he hadn't endured the test of time) by claiming that history hadn't ended, and that the philosopher's ideas could perfectly come back to life in the future. He also reminded that, contrary to what his critics said, Abramowski supported anarchism, i.e. a way to

⁴⁰⁰ Władysław Frasyniuk (n. 1954) was one of the main leaders of *Solidarność*. In late August 1980 he co-organized the strike of his working place, the 7th Depot of the Public Transport Enterprise in Wrocław (VII Zajeznia Miejskiego Przedsiębiorstwa Komunikacyjnego). Between August 1980 and December 1981 he held several posts in *Solidarność* at a regional and national level. After the establishment of Martial Law he went into hiding and, together with other prominent members of the organization, created in April 1982 the Provisional Coordination Committee of *Solidarność* (TKK NSZZ "Solidarność"). He was arrested several times between 1982 and 1986 and spent more than three years in jail. He was in favor of resorting to all possible alternatives to continue with open activism, but strengthening at the same time the underground opposition structures. He took part in the Round Table negotiations of February-April 1989. Member of Parliament between 1991-2001, he held several posts in the parties Unia Demokratyczna and Unia Wolności. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

⁴⁰¹ FRASYNIUK, Władysław: "List otwarty do członków i sympatyków NSZZ 'Solidarność'", *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 112, 10/I/1985, 1-3.

⁴⁰² Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 142.

⁴⁰³ Leszek Szaruga (n. 1946), whose real name is Aleksander Wirpsza, is a Polish poet, historian of literature, translator of German poetry and university lecturer. In the 1970s and 1980s he was editor of *drugi obieg* periodicals such as *Puls* and *Wezwania*. He was also a permanent collaborator of the émigré journal *Kultura*. Between 1979 and 1989 he collaborated under pseudonym in the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe. From 1987 and 1990 he lived in Western Berlin, where he worked for the Polish Section of the BBC and Deutsche Welle, as well as in various émigré periodicals.

⁴⁰⁴ SZARUGA, Leszek: *Szkoła polska*, Warszawa, Przedświt, 1984.

organize society without State institutions, but not anarchy, that is, complete chaos and lack of organization⁴⁰⁵.

Since *Solidarność* was a melting pot of different socio-political traditions united under the motto “us *versus* them”, or “Polish society *versus* Communist State”, Abramowski’s ideological eclecticism and anti-State theories suited perfectly the spirit of the movement. That’s why Giełżyński stressed along the conclusions of his book the heterodox, open and plural character of the thinker’s works. He spotted multiple past influences in them, like utopianism, Marxism, anarchism, Kant’s philosophy, cooperative movement or syndicalism, but he also drew some comparisons with more modern trends, like contemporary Catholic thought⁴⁰⁶ (especially after the II Vatican Council) and Gandhi’s doctrine, including the priority of moral principles, non-violence, search of truth or the importance of social consciousness in the process of historical transformations. For Giełżyński, therefore, the best way to describe Abramowski was as “a complete man” (*człowiek kompletny*). His general principles: fraternity, solidarity, the creation of an autonomous society based on pluralistic associations and free individuals, or the limitation of State power, could be ratified by almost every democratic oppositionist in Poland, including Catholic circles, left-winged humanists and anarcho-syndicalists under *Solidarność*’s “umbrella”⁴⁰⁷.

Finally, Giełżyński and Michnik agreed in defining Abramowski as a utopian. Far from being a pejorative assessment, this adjective drew him closer to past idealists who were exceptional visionaries, despite being ignored or scoffed in their times. The ideas that didn’t succeed before, as were Abramowski’s, might be precisely the ones that could most help to organize Polish society today, Michnik thought:

Abramowski was naïve. He appeared so to the National Democrats and the socialists, and he was so in reality. His plan for a ‘cooperative republic’ was crushed on the battlefields of the world war. Poland regained its sovereignty by other means and its political shape was different. But Abramowski could be described in another way: he was trusting. He trusted the good in the human condition, he trusted the sense of humanist values, he trusted the potential of man’s labor, he trusted friendship. He did not trust ideologies based on hatred or on political practices that degraded man to the role of an unthinking creature that must be ruled by coercion and inspired by tribal or class passions.

How much we need Edward Abramowski’s trust and distrust today!⁴⁰⁸

To begin with ethics is never a bad start, especially if, as it happened with opposition *inteligenci*, your moral stand is the cornerstone of your collective identity. Besides practical or strategic inspiration, it is in this universal and spiritual sense that Abramowski’s proposals came back to life in oppositionists’ minds.

⁴⁰⁵ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 145-146, quoting PARADOWSKI, Ryszard: “Edwarda Abramowskiego koncepcja socjalizmu bezpaństwowego”, *Colloquia Communia*, 3-4, 1984.

⁴⁰⁶ He was not the only one: Bronisław Geremek linked Abramowski’s ethical transformation of society with the idea of “second revolution” proposed by Emmanuel Mounier, the founder of the French Catholic personalist journal *Esprit*. According to the latter, this “second revolution”, beyond bringing a new social and technical order, should restore mankind’s capacity to rule over things. Because, Geremek added, the state is also a thing... Geremek: “Dwa narody”, 11.

⁴⁰⁷ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 151-156.

⁴⁰⁸ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 317; Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 5, also 139 & 156.

B.5) The danger of recovering past political ideologies

Despite continuously looking back at Polish history, opposition *inteligencja* was usually cautious about the possible re-creation of previous political programs and ideologies. As we have seen with Abramowski's case, when intellectuals performed a "tiger's leap into the past" they preferred to concentrate on general, inclusive aspects and transhistorical values rather than on specific or controversial policies that could seriously damage the consensus and cooperation atmosphere created between opposition groups.

But the danger was real. In their aim to recover an allegedly "lost Polishness" and distance as much as possible from anything that could be related to PRL regime, a considerable part of *Solidarność* members, for instance, wanted to return to the traditions of the interwar II Republic, which were far from being flawless: they referred to the constitutions of that period, reintroduced past national symbols, rebuilt the tradition of former political parties and organizations and encouraged the uncritical admiration of statesmen and politicians like Piłsudski. The dangers of nationalism and xenophobia were ingrained in those myths and symbols of the past, but few noticed or criticized this growing problem of radicalization in opposition ranks⁴⁰⁹ before general Jaruzelski's government used it as an ideal excuse to apply the Martial Law in December 1981⁴¹⁰.

After this happened, more *inteligenci* began to pay attention to the threat of taking historical experiences too literally or of misusing the past by recovering potentially dangerous attitudes and ideologies. They reconsidered their own previous mistakes or lack of interest on the topic and showed their reticence more explicitly than before⁴¹¹. What they generally stressed is that it was not a question of returning to the past in order to *stay* there, but of bringing to present time the positive, constructive elements that had been destroyed to use them as a starting point in the building of a new, different future. In other words, the past should be seen as a springboard to face present-day challenges in a wiser way⁴¹².

According to Andrzej Micewski, the reverence for the past in Poland was partly due to postwar historiography's biased interpretations. Worried about the consequences this manipulation might have in the preservation of Polish spiritual and cultural identity, many Poles felt an increasing concern about the knowledge of recent history. The problem about the successive waves of historical interest and literary *booms*, Micewski argued, was that they frequently contained nationalist elements and brought about "revival" attempts of certain political trends by groups that have an idealized view of the II Republic period. In the author's opinion, past political ideologies, such as Dmowski's or Piłsudski's, were the products of a particular moment in national life and of a very different geopolitical situation. Nowadays, these policies were completely anachronistic, so it was not advisable to recover them⁴¹³.

Unlike cultural or spiritual aspects, that can gather up strength from history, politics must benefit from present circumstances and be focused primarily on the future.

⁴⁰⁹ An outstanding exception, about which we will speak in following chapters: LIPSKI, Jan Józef: "Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy. Uwagi o megalomanii narodowej i ksenofobii Polaków", in LIPSKI, Jan Józef: *Powiedzieć sobie wszystko... Eseje o sąsiedztwie polsko-niemieckim* (wyb. tekstów oraz wstęp: Georg Ziegler), Gliwice-Warszawa, Wydawnictwo "Wokół nas" & Wydawnictwo Polsko-Niemieckie, 1996 (1981), 36-73.

⁴¹⁰ Domańska: "(Re)creative Myths...", 261; Baczko: "Polska Solidarności...", 125-126.

⁴¹¹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 13 and 68.

⁴¹² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 8.

⁴¹³ Micewski: "W przeszłość...", 406-412; Micewski: "Polski temat", 336.

Polish identity was not the monopoly of one single political movement, but a shared heritage. And it was not possible to re-create, for example, National Democracy or the interwar Socialist party out of their original contexts:

The cultural and spiritual identity of Polishness has a fundamental meaning in a divided world, given our strong connection with Latin and Christian culture. However, one cannot link independent cultural and spiritual identity with a specific orientation of political thought. (...) ... one cannot amount it [Polish spiritual identity, C.A.] to the mechanical attempts to revive one political orientation or another from the turn of the nineteenth century.⁴¹⁴

In his determination to find a “usable past” for opposition movements and to go beyond the traditional left-wing reservations about National Democracy, Adam Michnik pointed up the inclusive strategy the latter had in their struggle for independence as something positive and profitable in today’s situation:

The NDs [national democrats, C.A.] promoted broad participation in the movement of national resistance. They aimed to construct a *political camp*, not a party of those who believed in a particular doctrine. This is why they never said ‘all or nothing’ but rather, in every situation, pointed out the activities accessible to every citizen which could improve the nation’s lot.⁴¹⁵

However, Michnik was perfectly conscious too of how controversial Roman Dmowski was, and of the consequences that his ideas had for Polish life. In many senses, he represented the best and the worst of national character. His works, despite containing very accurate analyses of Poland’s situation between the nineteenth and twentieth century, were also a declaration of his personal phobias and narrow-mindedness. His view of Polishness was very exclusive and he betted on the use of force in international relations in order to achieve Poland’s survival. His xenophobia, anti-Semitism and aggressive nationalism, as well as his policies based on instinct and power instead of human rights and ideals, brought much trouble in the past. Therefore, the repetition of such mistakes was simply not an option today, in Michnik’s opinion⁴¹⁶.

Besides a totalitarian drift, there were dangerous expansionist elements too in both National Democracy’s and Polish Socialist Party’s programs. Dmowski’s idea of a “national Poland” entailed the subordination of individuals to national goals and a violent, physical expansionism. On the contrary, Piłsudski’s socialists inspired themselves on the Jagiellonian myth of “Poland of nations”. According to it, Poland should be the open and tolerant motherland of all the nations of the former commonwealth (Ukrainians, Germans, Jews, Belarusians, Lithuanians), spreading national values and culture in a patronizing way⁴¹⁷. However, by the end of the twentieth century, the realistic methods and maximalist goals promoted by opposition intellectuals must not override other national feelings present in Europe or oppose to Christian principles⁴¹⁸.

Uprising and conspiracy cases raised similar debates about up to what point could Poles look for answers in the past. The resort to arms or violence against the Communist State was completely ruled out by *inteligenci*, for instance, but not

⁴¹⁴ Micewski: “W przeszłość...”, 407, my transl.

⁴¹⁵ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 286; also Michnik: “Powstanie listopadowe...”, 86.

⁴¹⁶ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 304-317, also LIPSKI, Jan Józef: “Prawicowa droga do totalizmu”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 30, 1988, 105-108; HOLZER, Jerzy: “Lewica i totalitaryzm”. *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 30, 1988, 108-114.

⁴¹⁷ About these two classic Polish nationalist views: Davies: *God’s Playground...*, 25.

⁴¹⁸ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 294-298, 309; Micewski: “W przeszłość...”, 409; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 68.

clandestine activities. The most recent and major conspiracy that could be used as a precedent was the Home Army's (Armia Krajowa, AK), which led to Warsaw Uprising against the Nazi troops in the Second World War (August-October 1944).

However, the convenience of that past insurrection was still a controversial issue among oppositionists, given the lack of resources and arms of AK members and the ultimately disastrous consequences it had for the city and its inhabitants. Besides this, AK's organization was elitist and military, whereas *Solidarność* leaders and counselors supported civil conspiracy based on collaboration, small contributions and gestures from millions of sympathizers, especially after December 1981. This kind of "passive resistance" and widespread, bit by bit backing was defined by Czesław Bielecki as "social conspiracy" (*zmowa społeczna*)⁴¹⁹.

Of course, the memories and relationship with Warsaw Uprising were particularly strong (sometimes due to opposition membership or to direct family ties) and also convenient for oppositionists in practical terms: active participants and workers in critical groups or the underground media had frequent contact with former AK members, who supplied them with materials, machines, technical advice and their own experience in clandestine initiatives, discretion, etc. Nevertheless, the similarities between AK and *Solidarność* conspiracy networks were limited basically to techniques and tactics, for the latter's scope, ideology and structure, apart from the context and life training of younger generations, was substantially different⁴²⁰.

C) *The role of inteligenci today (1976-1991)*

In one of his 1984 *felietony* for *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Stefan Kisielewski was astonished and comforted in equal shares to see that, despite all the catastrophes and transformations experienced by Polish society since the 1940s, one essential thing had remained: a patriotic *inteligencja* representing (or aiming to represent) the country's interests. This made him reflect on the paradox of continuity and change in Polish history, which is also one of the cornerstones of our research:

What an odd thing, this Polish *inteligencja*: during the War it was dispersed, completely impoverished, murdered and deported to camps, decimated due to various emigrations; later, in the changing postwar conditions, it looked as if it was condemned to disappear, to dissolve in the waves of the new times and the new people, and suddenly, after years, it is reborn in its old shape. And it is reborn with a new "ethnic" basis, it is formed by people from the countryside or from old urban "lower classes", by promoted persons from different demographic and geographic backgrounds, or who had migrated. (...)

... it seems new, but it's old, it seems of the people, but it's incredibly similar to the previous post-nobility one. A new system, a new land, a new people —and the *inteligencja* is just the same as the one I grew out of⁴²¹! Polishness-Fatherland completely unchanged, I give my word!

(...) To observe and feel this (national) immutability in (social) mutability is, at any rate, something nice.⁴²²

⁴¹⁹ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Umowa i zmowa społeczna", in BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: *Wolność w obozie*, Warszawa, CDN, 1984 (1980), 34-40.

⁴²⁰ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 20-26; Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 10; Lipski: *KOR...*, 66-67, 76.

⁴²¹ As in English, the expression "wyrastać z czegoś" (to grow out of) in Polish can mean either "originate from", or "to have left something behind" (eg. the musical tastes one had in a previous stage of life). In Kisielewski's case, given his personal path and his generally critical appreciations of *inteligencja*'s idealistic premises, both meanings could be valid.

⁴²² KISIELEWSKI, Stefan: "Inteligencja czyli ojczyzna-polszczyzna", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 47, 18-XI-1984, 8, my transl.

Inteligencja's ethos was seen as the original and permanent component of Polishness. In spite of the repeated attempts to destroy it or "use" it in the government's own benefit, it came back to life when there was a "subject-agent in need"⁴²³ who was looking for a moral reference and wanted to save the part of history that was being cast to oblivion. Given its transhistorical character, each generation could take it up again and adapt it to the new context and specific demands of society.

It is highly possible that many opposition intellectuals played in a self-conscious way the *inteligencja's* traditional role of social engagement and political and moral leadership in PRL times⁴²⁴, even more so if they perceived that their own myth, collective identity and social position was being put in jeopardy by Communist authorities. This is especially clear in Adam Michnik's case, who suggested a series of missions that *inteligenci* should accomplish today. Firstly, they must defend humanist values and truth, despite the sacrifices it might entail, in order to become a moral and trustworthy example that transmits knowledge, awakens society's consciousness and encourages it to act collectively, from bottom to top. Secondly, they must lead the change with their proposals and, at the same time, join efforts with other social groups that can act as the main engines of transformation, like the workers. Thirdly, they should look for precedents that reinforce their position. The best way to fulfill this last assignment is by enrooting their activities and ideals in Polish tradition:

To formulate alternatives and to defend their values is the task of the intelligentsia, or those among them who wish to follow the tradition of the 'unbowed' intelligentsia of the early twentieth century (...). I feel linked to this tradition and to those who continue it today. If their voices are still faint, it is they who create independent, public opinion and develop nonconformist attitudes. The synchronization of their voices with those of the workers will shape the political aspirations of young people and thus the character of political changes both in Poland and in Eastern Europe. In the absence of free Press or free organizations, the moral and political responsibility of these intellectuals is enormous. It calls for an attitude whose logical consequence is to renounce material advantages and official honours in order to live in truth.⁴²⁵

"Living in truth" also meant risking repression. And it was precisely under this threatening pressure, for example after a house search, an arrest or while sitting in jail, when *inteligenci* assumed most consciously the role of representatives of the Polish nation. Leszek Moczulski, in his last declarations before the justice court in Autumn 1982, considered that he and the rest of the leaders of KPN (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej) were taking part in that trial "as the conscious part of the Nation" ("jako świadoma część Narodu"). Similarly, his companion Tadeusz Jandziszak assured that the most relevant aspect of their prosecution would not be the ensuing individual sentences, but the fact that, at the same time, Communists were attempting to carry out a trial against the nation to bring it down to its knees⁴²⁶.

The search for truth could entail taking wrong decisions and making mistakes too, in the eyes of some intellectuals. Many oppositionists were former members of the PZPR or had supported PRL initiatives, and that pro-Communist past caused them certain uneasiness and remorse, hence their need to justify it or expiate it in the framework of their re-identification with Polish critical *inteligencja's* ethos. Tadeusz Łepkowski, who had belonged to the Communist Party, considered that some *inteligenci's* political position shifts could be explained precisely due to their

⁴²³ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 26.

⁴²⁴ Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, XXVII.

⁴²⁵ Michnik: "The New Evolutionism", 276.

⁴²⁶ Leszek Moczulski's speech in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 31 and 30 respectively.

determination to pursue justice and truth⁴²⁷. Since Partition times, intellectuals had aimed for Poland's complete independence and were interested in any proposal that might tend to this goal combining utopia and realism. In PRL's early days, *inteligenci* had been absorbed and persuaded by the State apparatus with the promise of achieving these targets, so they gradually left aside their classic role in Polish society⁴²⁸.

On the other hand, Krystyna Kersten argued that, in the 1940s, when the clash between Communists and non-Communists was beginning to take shape in the country, patriotism and moral ideals did not belong exclusively to one side. Many who supported the PPR⁴²⁹ believed that, despite the high cost in victims, the ideal of a fairer Poland would be accomplished, whereas non-Communists perceived that Polishness and their most cherished values were being threatened by sovietization. There wasn't a division between a "true" and a "false" patriotism, neither between "good" and "bad" Poles according to political convictions, and many arguments were played down due to the extreme situations experienced in the War and postwar contexts⁴³⁰.

However, massive repression waves and the degeneration of the imposed regime soon followed. By the 1970s the governmental elites were completely de-ideologized and fraudulent; they had actually, and paradoxically, transformed into a fearsome anti-socialist power, in Łepkowski's view. They cynically demanded society to "commit" to the system while socialist and humanistic premises were in clear contradiction with their behaviors and lifestyles. This political and public atmosphere had corrupted a considerable part of Polish society, especially the persons who worked for or were dependent on official institutions. Ideals only had an ornamental function and had been substituted in practice for the cult of the State, bribery, socio-economic privileges, lies, anti-Semitic campaigns, empty ceremonials and consumerism.

In response to this, morality resurfaced with Catholic activism and democratic left-winged opposition movements. Catholics, despite being a majority in Polish society, were treated like second rate citizens by Communist authorities due to their creed. Thanks to the reforms undertaken after the Second Vatican Council, the Polish Church became more involved in people's everyday problems (especially of the youth and the workers) and encouraged public activism among believers. Catholic *inteligencja*, grouped around Znak, Więź and the KIKs, found a common ethical ground with lay, liberal and socialist intellectuals, and contributed to the opposition cause with traditional national and Christian values and the new social doctrine of the Church. They proposed a peaceful struggle for society's rights and demanded the re-introduction of truth and morality in public life. The appointment of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II and his visit to Poland next year, in 1979, rounded up this process and was an additional moral stimulus for Polish population:

This election was interpreted everywhere in Poland as a great change in the nation's life, since it had attained a spiritual leadership with an enormous authority. Faith and hope ceased to be for the Poles a nice motto used only during celebrations. It became a force. (...) A considerable part of society understood since June 1979 that, if it was united and solidary, it was a great power, that "they" were nobody, a façade, morally speaking, and foreign to the nation. The Polish nation became spiritually independent after the Pope's visit. Soon afterwards it wished to attain, through

⁴²⁷ See also Chapter 4.

⁴²⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 34-35; also Lipski: *KOR...*, 72-73.

⁴²⁹ The Polish Worker's Party, Polska Partia Robotnicza (Communist Party). In 1948 it absorbed Polish Socialist Party and became the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotników, PZPR).

⁴³⁰ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 9-10; KERSTEN, Krystyna: "Kłopoty ze świadkami historii", in KERSTEN, Krystyna: *Pisma rozproszone* (wybór i przygotowanie do druku: Tomasz Szarota i Dariusz Libionka), Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2005 (1989), 127.

the hands of the workers, independence in the working place, national freedom and self-determination, and expected that the State worked for society.⁴³¹

The “other half” of critical movements would be constituted, according to Łepkowski, by left-wing democratic opposition groups that were aiming to give genuine substance to freedom, equality, justice, human dignity, autonomy and, of course, to democracy⁴³². Many of the members of these associations (KSS KOR, TKN, Doświadczenie i Przyszłość, free trade unions...) were Communist dissidents who, like Łepkowski and Kersten, explained their political and intellectual evolution in ethical terms.

Bronisław Geremek, for instance, argued that the same values that had led him to socialism and political engagement made him leave PZPR in 1968, when he realized not only that the Communist system was beyond reform, but that it was masking a totalitarian and anti-Semitic government. He then sheltered during some years in his professional activities (that is, his researches on Medieval History), but in the late 1970s he got involved in the new-born underground educational initiatives of Uniwersytet Łatający and TKN. The questions that students had posed him during his temporary “political retreat” had restored his hopes and stimulated his return to active commitment to contribute to shape the political culture of young generations. It was then when he began asking himself if public engagement was a moral imperative. His final answer was yes: driven by a moral or citizen duty, or by the wish of looking for better solutions to the workers’ problems, he went with his colleague Tadeusz Mazowiecki from Warsaw to the Gdańsk shipyards in August 1980.

To have supported the Communist government for a long period of time made Geremek feel both guilty and indebted to Polish society; he thought he should do something to counteract any previous evil he could have caused others by his acts or omissions in the political sphere:

- (...) Je considérais même que j’avais une obligation particulière de m’opposer au totalitarisme, au communisme, au Parti, précisément parce que j’en avais été membre auparavant. Je me sentais tenu de rembourser la dette que j’avais contractée pour avoir gardé cette carte du Parti pendant vingt ans.

- *Vous vous sentiez coupable?* [asked Jacek Żakowski, the interviewer]

- Oui, mais je ne songeais pas à m’amender. En revanche, je pensais que je devais faire quelque chose qui serait dans mes possibilités pour m’opposer à ce totalitarisme désespérant. C’est pour cette raison que j’ai rejoint les groupes de recherche qui ont vu le jour dans les années soixante-

⁴³¹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 58, my transl.; also MICHNIK, Adam: “A Lesson in Dignity”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 160-168; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 61-62.

⁴³² Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 56-58; Lipski: *KOR...*, 62-78. In Poland, many oppositionists who were non-believers nevertheless acknowledged the value of Christian principles and followed them conscientiously, hence their moral authority. All of this suggests the image of *inteligenci* as some kind of “secular priests” as well. For example, Lipski said about Kuroń: “His far-reaching acceptance of the principles of Christian ethics, his rejection of ethical relativism and view of ethical values as if they were transcendent, and his refusal to make a distinction between the ethics of public life and the ethics of private life— all this made Kuroń into one of the most ‘Christian’ of those who do not accept the Christian faith, and yet he was representative of his ideological milieu”. Lipski: *KOR...*, 75.

Lipski himself strongly defended Christian values in *KOR* and “Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy”. About him, Kisiel said: “[He is] My friend, who drives me crazy with his humanism, democratic views and whatever else, with his *clichés*. We always argue, but he is a saintly man. I said to him once: ‘You are a saintly ass’. But he didn’t take offence. I like him very much, but his *Dwie ojczyzny...* is senseless, in my opinion. But he is a heroic guy”. KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: *Abecadło Kisiela*, Warszawa, Oficyna Wydawnicza Interim, 1990 (1988), 59-60, my transl.

dix, la Société des cours scientifiques [TKN], illégale, bien sûr, et leurs diverses activités indépendantes politiquement, qui précédèrent août 1980. Je trouvais cela naturel et nécessaire.⁴³³

In other words, moral authority, lay or religious, was missed in Polish political life. Critical *inteligenci* aimed to fill this ethical power vacuum either through a more active commitment or through the correction of what they interpreted as a previous “deviation” in their lives due both to deceit and self-deceit. That was the reason why it was so important for *inteligencja* not to make the same mistakes as before. For example, not to emigrate after December 13th 1981 was a question of honor and loyalty to others and to one’s own principles, in Adam Michnik’s view. Exile would be understood as a capitulation and a desertion, and the government would use it in its propaganda to discredit opposition as a whole and undermine its influence on society. To stay in the country was the first step not to lose once again the nation’s confidence and hence to remain faithful to one’s national duties as *intelligent* and oppositionist⁴³⁴. The second step, if imprisoned, was not to give up and collaborate with the police to “buy” one’s own freedom. During Christmas Eve in 1981, Władysław Bartoszewski (1922-2015) addressed his fellow internment camp companions in this sense:

“For the ninth time in my life I spend Christmas in jail⁴³⁵. It might not be tactful that I tell you this today. But I do it only to cheer you up: it is possible to be in prison during nine Christmas and not yield. I want to comfort you with this. I do not wish anybody to spend nine Christmas behind bars. One time is enough. But one must not lose hope. And it will come a time for us when we will again celebrate Christmas at home with our families. I do not wish above all that we return home promptly, despite each one of us desires it much. I wish that you return home in such a state that you can look your wives, children and all of your friends in the eye. We do not know when they will set us free. But more important than liberation is the outer and inner situation in which we leave this place.”

After [I had said] these words almost everyone was on the verge of tears.⁴³⁶

The Promethean mission of intellectuals was regarded primarily as a global, all-embracing effort. However, according to TKN’s foundation statement (January 22nd, 1978), PRL’s educational model promoted precisely the opposite: a sterile professional specialization to turn young intellectuals into mere “task performers”. This way, the “new *inteligenci*” would not only be excluded from participating in the formulation of those tasks, they would also be incapable of grasping their character and far-reaching consequences. Instead, TKN and KSS “KOR” members supported that young Poles should search for the truth about the world and about themselves to encourage a creative and autonomous citizenship. It was, hence, a question of values and general historical comprehension: individuals needed to understand social life in its wholeness and to

⁴³³ GEREMEK, Bronisław: *La rupture. La Pologne du communisme à la démocratie*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1991 (1990), 105-106, also 107-109 and GEREMEK, Bronisław: “Wspomnienia Bronisława Geremka o sierpniu 80”, pages 1-3, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of Polish Unit), box 9. The latter document is an unidentified transcription, probably for Radio Free Europe’s internal use. It is narrated in first person and there are similarities with other texts of Geremek (like *La rupture* or Mary Blume’s article). At the bottom of the text it says that a person under the pseudonym of “Observator z Warszawy” had that talk with Geremek and prepared it for print. No dates available.

⁴³⁴ MICHNIK, Adam: “Why You Are Not Emigrating...: A Letter from Białołęka 1982”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 21-24; Lipski: *KOR...*, 68-71.

⁴³⁵ Bartoszewski was interned several times along his life, both during the Nazi occupation of Poland and the Stalinist period. He was deported to Auschwitz in September 1940, but was set free in April 1941. He spent a year and a half in jail between November 1946 and April 1948, and then five more, from December 1949 until August 1954.

⁴³⁶ BARTOSZEWSKI, Władysław: *Jesień nadziei. Warto być przyzwoitym*, [Lublin], Spotkania, 1986, 6, my transl.

acquire a deep knowledge about how things had come to be as they were⁴³⁷. In sum, the founders of the Society of Scientific Courses outlined in their manifesto two mutually exclusive models of *inteligencja*: one dependent on political power and limited to the accomplishment of orders, and a critical, independent one that had a broad perspective of society's problems, acted as its moral conscience and sponsored cohesion within diversity. The latter was the model that intellectual oppositionists were trying to save... in order to save themselves too.

The discovery of the Communists' lies and manipulations regarding past events forged the awareness and character of opposition *inteligenci*, especially of those who devoted themselves professionally to historical research. It is not strange that, as a reaction to this, opposition movements demanded truth from authorities and, at the same time, searched for the truth themselves. There were several ways of doing this, like filling in the official "blank spots" or by reinterpreting certain episodes of Polish history. Others, like Krystyna Kersten, wanted to provide their readers with "raw material" (*surowiec*) and recount things from the beginning and "as they really were" ("jak to naprawdę było"), or at least as impartially as possible, instead of providing a mere counter-narrative of PRL's official version. A solid knowledge and understanding of recent historical facts, Kersten believed, was the key to independent critical thought, and thus the path leading to society's intellectual emancipation⁴³⁸.

In close connection to the latter, the next target on *inteligencja*'s list of tasks was *political* emancipation or, in other words, the recovery of Polish nation's agency in public life. Through their personal example, by not throwing in the towel or running out of steam, intellectual oppositionists became society's "cheerleaders" and made people realize that each person's determination and contribution counted. This was an essential point in Michnik's program:

... above all, we must create a strategy of hope for the people, and show them that their efforts and risks have a future. The underground will not succeed in building a widespread national opposition without such a strategy —without faith in the purpose of action. Otherwise, resistance will amount to nothing more than a moral testimony or an angry reaction. And the movement will cease to be one that is aware of its political goals, that is armed with patience and consistency and that is capable of winning.⁴³⁹

Surely, it is easy to spot in many of these comments a certain patronizing tone. In a similar way as they imagined that former *inteligencja* had breathed national consciousness into the rest of their fellow countrymen a century or a century and a half ago, transforming them into Poles, opposition intellectuals pictured their own present-day mission as the building or the recovery of national self-determination in the name of other social strata. This concerned especially industrial workers who, since 1976, had accepted opposition intellectuals' aid. For example, Jarosław Kurski, a friend of Bronisław Geremek, described the latter's close relation with *Solidarność*'s leader Lech Wałęsa in the following way: "Geremek is tantamount to *żeromszczyzna*⁴⁴⁰ (...). All the culture in which Bronek⁴⁴¹ was raised up stemmed from Żeromski. And Wałęsa was the people to whom the nobleman must go and help. The Polish *inteligent* must serve the

⁴³⁷ "Deklaracja TKN", 8; Lipski: *KOR...*, 62, 64 & 77.

⁴³⁸ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 7-9.

⁴³⁹ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 55 and Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 10. See Chapter 2 as well.

⁴⁴⁰ This expression approximately means "the spirit of Stefan Żeromski", or "what Żeromski was".

⁴⁴¹ Bronisław's diminutive in Polish.

Polish people, whose emanation was Wałęsa”⁴⁴². Hence, collaboration between different social groups could be judged as an uneven exchange, for *inteligenci* assumed from the start that they were the “soul”, plus a good deal of the “brain” of the opposition body. Or, to put it in subtler terms, *inteligencja* was a kind of *primus inter pares* within opposition ranks.

Given this perception, it was logical that *inteligenci* felt ultimately responsible for not foreseeing the upcoming repressive reaction of PRL State that ended up with Martial Law and *Solidarność*’s illegalization. Too much self-confidence, the lack of a well-defined political basis, underestimation of the government’s room for manoeuvre... Adam Michnik’s and Czesław Bielecki’s *mea culpa* were already circulating by the first half of 1982:

The responsibility for this situation doesn’t lie with the crew of workers, but with all those who (for instance, writing these words) were destined to shape the trade union’s political views through their intellectual production. Theoretical reflection—which, by the way, is worth taking note of—about the changes in the system trailed in the wake of events. Apart from the usual formulae there was hardly any political reflection. Practice liquidated theory. Not for the first time in Polish history...

(...) There was in this [attitude, C.A.] naïveté, wishful thinking and a long tradition in Polish history, in which the attempt to terrorize Polish society by resorting to the Polish army was something difficult to imagine. The previous months [to December 1981, C.A.] engraved on social consciousness an image of the conflicts between the State and society in which there was no room for open violence.⁴⁴³

From the start, the West considered an intervention and the “normalization” of the Poles as the obvious end of our revolution. We alone deceived ourselves by pretending that the problem didn’t exist. Each time that the outside world showed us tense military ranks and files of Soviet bayonets we turned a blind eye to them. (...)

December 13th made us realize how reprehensively naïve was our faith in the historical compromise that was supposedly going to take place in Poland. Our faith in the possibility of an agreement between totalitarian Communism and an authentic social movement, that both parties would wish for a compromise in the name of higher national reasons.⁴⁴⁴

In the same, slightly paternalistic line, *inteligencja* was to “offer society a vision of a democratic Poland” as well⁴⁴⁵. Such a mission, and hence intellectuals’ role in political life, stretched beyond PRL times and the fall of Communism to the transitional and democratic period, when it did not always achieve the expected success⁴⁴⁶. Nevertheless, former oppositionists like Geremek thought in the early 1990s that they could still act as a moral reference point in the political arena during hard and changing times, until professional politicians finally made their way to power: “Then there will be no more room for intellectuals who not only seek space for reflection but who have an ethical commitment rather than career aims. At that point”, he remarked with a twinge of bitterness and resignation, “an intellectual will be more in his place in a jury in Monte Carlo than in a parliament or government”⁴⁴⁷. But despite the fact that he actually *was* as a member of a jury for a television festival in Monte Carlo when he was

⁴⁴² KURSKI, Jarosław: “Bronisław Geremek profesor niedopasowany - sylwetka na 70 urodziny”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13-VII-2008, my transl., also Lipski: *KOR...*, 6 and 458.

⁴⁴³ Michnik: “Polska Wojna”, 6, my transl.

⁴⁴⁴ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: “Nasza wielka stabilizacja”, in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 41, my transl. Also Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 350-355.

⁴⁴⁵ Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 54.

⁴⁴⁶ See for instance OST, David: “Introduction”, in Michnik: *The Church...*, 25

⁴⁴⁷ BLUME, Mary: “In Poland, the historian who couldn’t quit politics”, *The International Herald Tribune*, 17-II-1992.

interviewed, as long as he felt that he could boost people's awareness, transmit them democratic convictions and encourage them to get involved in socio-political affairs, he wouldn't give up his public duty:

Reluctant politician that he is, Geremek believes that an intellectual can help instill a notion of citizenship into people who have never known a democratic regime.

'The problem is to show the young how they can become citizens - not the objects of power but the subjects of power. (...) I think people must have their interests and their interests can coincide with high principles.'

Geremek will be 60 years old next month (...). A year ago he decided to give up politics, then he found he couldn't.

'There were young people who said if you leave it means you have been broken and if you have been broken what is the point of our trying? Or it means that you have failed and you are abandoning us. And so,' Geremek said, 'I continued'.⁴⁴⁸

Politics is based mainly on trust and delegation of power. If politicians believe that that power no longer emanates from others but from themselves, so that they "forget" they are the representatives of a society and believe they can act independently (Bourdieu's *political fetishism*), that trust is betrayed. In former Communist countries, the detachment between the governments and the governed was so big and the distrust towards anything that reminded of political power so deep that intellectuals, as well as other social groups within opposition, were generally unwilling to define what they were doing as "politics"⁴⁴⁹. But, of course, it was; and, to a considerable extent, Polish oppositionists managed to build up the socio-political credit and acquire the symbolic power and authority that Communist politicians had lost (or never had). Critical intellectuals were conscious of the fragility of this bond between them and the rest of society, hence their insistence in sticking to their principles as a way to secure social support and preserve their moral authority, which was regarded as a fundamental aspect of their collective identity⁴⁵⁰. To instill a sense of community based on imponderables was a top priority, according to Václav Havel:

The dissident movement was not typically ideological. Of course, some of us tended more to the right, others to the left, some were close to one trend in opinion or politics, others to another. Nevertheless, I don't think this was the most important thing. What was essential was something different: the courage to confront evil together and in solidarity, the will to come to an agreement and to cooperate, the ability to place the common and general interest over any personal or group interests, the feeling of common responsibility for the world, and the willingness personally to stand behind one's own deeds. Truth and certain elementary values, such as respect for human rights, civil society, the indivisibility of freedom, the rule of law —these were notions that bound us together and made it worth our while to enter again and again into a lopsided struggle with the powers that be.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ Blume: "In Poland...".

⁴⁴⁹ A very clear exception was KPN, whose members unambiguously defined as a political party.

⁴⁵⁰ Bourdieu: *Language and Symbolic...*, esp. "Authorized language: The Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse", 107-116; "On Symbolic Power", 163-170; "Political representation: Elements for a Theory of the Political Field", 171-202; "Delegation and Political Fetishism", 203-219. Also the "Editor's Introduction", written by John B. Thompson, 1-31. Lipski: *KOR...*, 62, 463. On Stefan Kisielewski's distrust of politics and negative opinion about intellectuals entering politics: Kisielewski: *Testament Kisiela...*, 12, 36, 64 and 82, conversation dates: 13-V, 30-VII, 11-X and 12-XII-1990, respectively.

⁴⁵¹ HAVEL, Václav: "Wrocław University. Wrocław, Poland, December 21, 1992", Havel: *The Art...*, 111-112; also in the same volume: "Asahi Hall. Tokyo, April 23, 1992", 95.

Similarly, Geremek interpreted the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski's proposal of a "conservative-liberal-socialist" program as an appeal for the subordination of political ideologies and interests to universal values. For him, these values included human dignity and solidarity, freedom of individuals, groups and nations, justice, equal chances for all, to overcome individual and class selfishness and to respect the heritage of the past⁴⁵².

Official and professionalized politics was undoubtedly discredited in Poland by the 1970s. Therefore, it was better for oppositionists (not only intellectuals, but workers too) to be seen as amateur politicians and not lose the "innocence" of the beginner in the political field. They should be always perceived as a part of society and avoid the risk of isolating from it. Furthermore, they were to give politics a renovated meaning by going back to what they considered its original purpose: to provide a public service. The engines of such a service to community must be sense of duty, commitment and responsibility instead of the thirst for power that ended up corrupting its essence and delegitimizing it. About his own experience as a politician, Geremek asserted:

Dans ma biographie politique une chose sera toujours absente, c'est le goût du pouvoir: je n'en ai aucun; mais le goût de l'engagement, oui; autrement je ne serais plus dans la vie politique, surtout maintenant que j'ai le choix. J'ai par contre le sentiment d'un service à exercer. (...) Mais si j'essaie de me situer dans la vie, et si j'essaie parfois de me comprendre moi-même, je n'arrive pas à me comprendre en termes de carrière politique, ni d'honneurs que la vie politique peut donner, mais dans cette notion du 'dû' qu'un homme ressent à l'égard de son temps et de sa société.⁴⁵³

That was the reason why he firstly refused to continue in Polish opposition's political forefront when he was asked to be a candidate for June 1989 elections. He felt that the collective goals he was struggling for had been or were about to be achieved. This didn't mean that *inteligenci* refused to exercise their share of power, only that this (delegated) authority, and hence their influence within society, was to be displayed in different albeit adjacent areas of the political field, such as political counseling or their previous work as opinion formers:

Je pensais que c'était [to leave the political forefront, C.A.] une conséquence naturelle de ce que j'avais fait, persuadé d'avoir accompli ma part de la mission des intellectuels polonais, qui ont toujours servi avant tout la Pologne et non leurs ambitions ou leurs intérêts personnels. Je voulais que ce fût clair. Dans la mesure où j'étais un homme connu, j'estimais que mon refus de postuler pour des honneurs serait une certaine confirmation de cette tradition. Je m'imaginais que je resterais l'un des conseillers de Solidarité et de Walesa. Je voulais me trouver là où je serais vraiment utile.⁴⁵⁴

Despite finally accepting to continue his political career (which lasted until his death), Geremek's words and initial reluctance, similarly to Havel's, suggest a certain incompatibility between the critical intellectual's *habitus* and *modus vivendi* and the direct exercise of politics.

But was it possible for an opposition *intelligent* to keep academic and political spheres separate, if moral principles were his/her basic reference point? Or was it inevitable that these facets mingled and coexisted in a more or less harmonious, complementary, even contradictory way? A more specific approach to Bronisław Geremek's biography will provide us some clues to answer these inquiries.

⁴⁵² Geremek: "Dwa narody", 5.

⁴⁵³ DUBY, Georges and GEREMEK, Bronisław: *Passions communes. Entretiens avec Philippe Sainteny*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1992, 43.

⁴⁵⁴ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 144.

D) Case study: *On how reflection can lead to action and vice versa. Bronisław Geremek's interest in the outcasts of history and his subsequent political commitment.*

Despite Polish modern history was never a central issue, not even a side topic, in Bronisław Geremek's professional career, this historian and former oppositionist nevertheless experienced an evolution along his life that we would like to highlight in connection to the *inteligencja's* self-perception, the historian's role in society and his or her eventual political commitment.

First of all, since very early in his academic life, Bronisław Geremek took an outstanding interest in the lower social strata and the outcasts, to the extent of becoming his main line of work for more than twenty years⁴⁵⁵. In 1990, when interviewed by Jacek Żakowski, Geremek reckoned that his sensitivity towards suffering was partially forged during his childhood, a period of his life which, nevertheless, he spoke very seldom and reluctantly about. Back then, he says, the world burned and fell apart continuously before his eyes, taking with it his small universe of family continuities, values and principles:

Je ne suis jamais revenu à mes expériences d'enfance, qui pourtant sont celles qui m'ont formé. Le monde se consumait sous mes yeux. Comme se consumait le petit univers des continuités familiales qui renferme la durabilité des valeurs, des règles, des principes évidents. Dans ma vie d'enfant, le monde s'effondrait sans cesse. Cela aussi a façonné ma sensibilité ultérieure.⁴⁵⁶

Bronisław Geremek, *né* Benjamin Lewertow, had Jewish origins⁴⁵⁷. Besides his father, who was a Zionist, the rest of the members of his family were orthodox Jews. According to his elder brother, Jerry Lewart (*né* Israel Lewertow), one of their grandfathers was even a *magid*, that is, an especially charismatic rabbi who led a Jewish community and was thought to have visionary abilities.

From 1940 up to 1942, Geremek and his family (his mother, father and elder brother) were shut away in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1942, his father prepared the flight of his wife and younger son Benjamin and sent them with a Polish citizen, Stefan Gieremek, to Zawichost, a small town in Małopolska (Lesser Poland). Geremek's father died in Auschwitz sometime between Spring 1943 and late Autumn 1944. It was in this last date when Israel, Geremek's brother, was also sent to Auschwitz and learnt about his father's death. Fortunately, he managed to survive. After spending a few years in the new-born state of Israel and briefly reuniting with his family in Poland in the early

⁴⁵⁵ GEREMEK, Bronisław: *Le Salariat dans l'artisanat parisien aux XIII^e-XV^e siècles. Étude sur le marché de la main-d'oeuvre au Moyen Age*, Paris, Mouton, 1968; *Les marginaux parisiens au XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, Paris, Flammarion, 1976; *Inutiles au monde: truands et misérables dans l'Europe moderne, 1350-1600 présenté par Bronisław Geremek*, [Paris], Gallimard, 1980; *La potence ou la pitié: l'Europe et les pauvres du Moyen Age à nos jours*, [Paris], Gallimard, 1987; "Le marginal", in LE GOFF, Jacques, CARDINI, Franco et al.: *L'homme médiéval*, Paris, Seuil, 1989; *Les fils de Caïn. L'image des pauvres et des vagabonds dans la littérature européenne du X^e au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, Flammarion, 1991; *Histoire sociale, exclusions et solidarité: leçon inaugurale faite le vendredi 8 janvier 1993*, [Paris], Collège de France, 1993. See also SCHMITT, Jean-Claude: "L'histoire des marginaux", in LE GOFF, Jacques, CHARTIER, Roger, REVEL, Jacques (dirs.): *La nouvelle histoire*, Paris, CEPL, 1978, 344-369, esp. 347 and 369.

⁴⁵⁶ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 108.

⁴⁵⁷ "Mój wielki brat" (interview to Jerry Lewart, brother of Bronisław Geremek, carried out by Waldemar Piasecki), *Przegląd*, 30, 2008; BOJARSKI, Piotr and NOWAK, Włodzimierz (współpr. Joanna Szczęsna): "Bronisław Geremek ucieka z getta. Chudy chłopak w czterech swetrach", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21-VII-2008; Kurski: "Bronisław Geremek..."

1950s, he decided to establish himself in the United States, where he lived for the rest of his life⁴⁵⁸.

On the other hand, Israel's and Benjamin's mother married Stefan Gieremek after the War; Benjamin, aged twelve then, changed his name for Bronisław and began using the surname of his adoptive father, which lost its "i". The new family lived from 1945 till 1948 in Wschowa, a town where many Poles from the ancient Eastern lands (now belonging to Lithuania, the Ukraine and Belarus) moved to, as it happened in other former German areas within Poland's new Western borders.

When asked a few years ago about him as a result of his unexpected death in a car accident (July 2008), Gieremek's acquaintances from Wschowa insisted that, as a teenager, Bronek always avoided to speak about his childhood⁴⁵⁹. This was also kept up throughout his adult daily life, as if his early years were behind a closed door whose key he didn't want to find: "... cela [mes origines juives, C.A.]", he told Żakowski, "est lié à mon enfance, que j'ai verrouillée en moi. (...) Dans la vie de tous les jours, c'est une porte fermée à double tour. Une de ces cases de ma biographie auxquelles je ne reviens jamais. Je ne veux pas en retrouver la clef..."⁴⁶⁰.

It was no secret in the town of Wschowa that Gieremek was adopted and had Jewish origins, but it was rarely talked about⁴⁶¹. A colleague from *gimnazjum*⁴⁶², Józef Wilczyński, remembered that when the Second World War was mentioned and commented, Gieremek simply vanished. Only once he told him: "We went through Gehenna"⁴⁶³. If it hadn't been for peoples' help, we wouldn't be having this conversation today"⁴⁶⁴.

It seems that this feeling of gratefulness never faded in Gieremek's memories, as can be deduced from a conversation he had during a dinner at his friends' the Kurskis' in February 2008, hardly six months before his fatal accident⁴⁶⁵. Apparently, in the Summer of 1942, the ten-year-old Benjamin Lewertow managed to escape from the famine that was devastating the inhabitants of Warsaw Ghetto and stayed for a few weeks at the house of some of his parents' friends in the Arian zone, in order to heal from the diseases he had contracted. He told the Kurskis that he would never forget that first short journey in tram through the center of Warsaw, following his mother's instructions to reach their friends' home. He remembered that the people travelling in the "Polish part" looked at him in a very significant way, for it was evident where he

⁴⁵⁸ "Mój wielki brat".

⁴⁵⁹ Bojarski and Nowak: "Bronisław Gieremek...", my transl.

⁴⁶⁰ Gieremek: *La rupture...*, 109.

⁴⁶¹ Later on, when Gieremek was an oppositionist, PRL propaganda would use this personal information for its repressive campaigns, which contained anti-Semitic elements. For example: (bie): "Kto organizował opozycyjną działalność?", *Trybuna Ludu*, 18-XII-1981. See also LEWIS, Anthony: "Orwell in Poland", *The New York Times*, 1-III-1982, both available in Gieremek's biographical files, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit). It happened likewise with other *inteligenci* with Jewish origins, like Adam Michnik.

⁴⁶² In the Polish educational system the *gimnazjum* is a middle school (junior high school) for pupils aged 13 to 16.

⁴⁶³ Valley in the South-West of Jerusalem where human sacrifices were carried out in the name of the god Moloch. It's the equivalent to hell and eternal condemnation in Jewish tradition. See Chapter 2 for another reference to Moloch, this time Lipski's.

⁴⁶⁴ Bojarski and Nowak: "Bronisław Gieremek...", my transl.

⁴⁶⁵ Maybe the comment he made in 1990 to Żakowski was becoming true, though back then he wasn't at all convinced about it? Was Gieremek remembering his childhood experiences more often as he grew older? We will never know for sure: "On se plaît à dire que plus l'on vieillit, plus l'on revient à l'enfance, plus la formation initiale et les premières expérimentations se font sentir. Moi, je n'en suis toujours pas là". Gieremek: *La rupture...*, 109.

came from: a weak, exhausted, trembling child wearing four sweaters at the height of August certainly belonged to the Ghetto. But no-one informed against him. On the contrary, that time he perceived friendly attitudes and solidarity. Somebody told him to beware of the German who was sitting in the “nur für Deutsche” coach. He felt safe.

In recent years, Geremek also explained to the journalist of the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, Michał Winiarski, that he simply couldn't speak about his boyhood because it contained experiences that were too hard to assume in a rational way. In the aforementioned dinner with the Kurskis, Geremek referred to a conversation he had had with Janusz Korczak⁴⁶⁶, whom he knew since 1939. He told him he wanted to be a writer when he grew up. Korczak replied that, besides being wise and reading a lot, a writer must also understand the world, even if it's criminal, bad and unfair, and asked young Benjamin Lewertow if he would be able to do so. That was the reason, Geremek said, why he finally didn't become a writer: he was never able to understand death, hunger and human despair, nor the nightmare that had surrounded him in the Warsaw Ghetto⁴⁶⁷.

However, hope was very present too in Geremek's thoughts and actions. This was highlighted precisely by Jarosław Kurski in the text he prepared in 2002 to celebrate his friend's 70th birthday: “In an interview to *Viva!* Geremek told [Piotr] Najsztub about the optimism that never ceased to accompany him in his public activities, because ‘he saw many joyful and wonderful things even when there was hell all around... In the worst situation possible there is a chance... I learnt to bet on the chance’”⁴⁶⁸.

But something began to change imperceptibly in young Bronisław's views during the Postwar period in Poland. His family moved from Wschowa to Warsaw in 1948, the year when the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) was created as a result of the inclusion of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) within the Polish workers' Party (PPR). There, the boy who had belonged to a Catholic Marian Society⁴⁶⁹ discovered a new world of books (Barbusse, Vercors, Aragon, Sartre, Camus...), very different from those he had read until then:

“Dans ces lectures il [himself, Bronisław Geremek, C.A.] trouve une réplique au malheur humain. Il y apprend des choses sur le monde, l'Europe ; il y rencontre l'idée de justice sociale et une critique de la démocratie occidentale; il y lit **la nécessité d'un prix à payer quand on veut la justice sociale à grande échelle**. A l'époque”, Geremek told Żakowski in 1990, “je pensais que le communisme était la jeunesse du monde.”⁴⁷⁰

Thus, among his enthusiastic optimism, his hopes to improve the fate of the oppressed and do justice, and his wish to build a new country leaving his own tragic

⁴⁶⁶ Janusz Korczak (1878 or 1879-1942) was the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit, a Polish-Jewish educator, children's author and pediatrician. He directed during many years an orphanage in Warsaw. Despite he received many offers of safe-conduct, he refused to leave his orphans when they were sent in 1942 from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp. He died there that same year.

⁴⁶⁷ Bojarski and Nowak: “Bronisław Geremek...”.

⁴⁶⁸ Kurski: “Bronisław Geremek...”, my transl. See also GEREMEK, Bronisław: “Warszawska wiosna?”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 23-IV-1989, 2.

⁴⁶⁹ Sodalicia Mariańska, the Sodality of Our Lady in English, was founded in the XVIth century by the Belgian Jesuit Jean Leunis. To know more about its history and rules: <http://www.sodality.ie/>. Another interesting piece of information regarding Geremek's relation to Catholicism: despite not being a believer, according to his brother Jerry Lewart there was a time in Geremek's youth when he wanted to be a priest. “Mój wielki brat”.

⁴⁷⁰ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 105, bold mine, also 17-18. Similarly, Jedlicki's interview with Magdalena Bajer: “Nie marksizm mnie uwiódł. Rozmowa z profesorem Jerzym Jedlickim”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 78-79.

past aside⁴⁷¹, Geremek, more than forty years later, considered he assumed something else too when he joined the new-born PZPR in 1950: that progress always involved some “side effects”, otherwise certainly negligible...

However, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 with the participation of Polish troops made Geremek lose all hope of being able to reform the Socialist system: “Ce qui était apparu comme le prix à payer pour la justice s’est avéré être l’essence du mal qui s’était donné pour masque la justice. Mon départ du Parti [Communiste] n’était pas un acte politique mais un choix moral.”⁴⁷². Geremek not only checked with disappointment that, ironically, Communist ideals were just dead letter for authorities, but also that some of those ideals, like the extreme belief in a certain “historical logic” and “purpose”, conveyed serious dangers for a society which aimed to be free:

Dans la crise du communisme, je veux attirer l’attention sur un seul élément: le délabrement de cette charpente idéologique qui tenait à la conviction que le communisme était la jeunesse du monde, la logique de l’histoire, le passage obligé du développement, la réalisation du droit des masses populaires lésées jusque-là par l’histoire. Ces affirmations ne se limitaient pas au langage de la propagande, elles étaient également un instrument de domination idéologique.⁴⁷³

In the 1990s, Geremek thought that, besides his ongoing professional formation as a historian, it was also his blurry memory of the Warsaw Ghetto what made him be suspicious about eschatological ideologies and refrain from political action, hence his modest engagement as a Party member. In sum, he was rather an observer than an activist:

Dans mon cas, ce dernier [l’engagement avec le Parti Communiste Polonais, C.A.] n’était pas grand. Peut-être parce que je plaçais l’histoire avant la politique. Peut-être aussi parce que l’image du ghetto de Varsovie, estompée dans ma mémoire personnelle, le temps de l’eschatologie vécue me protégeaient de l’eschatologie programmée. L’observation de la politique me passionnait mais je gardais mes distances avec l’action politique.⁴⁷⁴

Now that we’ve seen the background motivations of Bronisław Geremek’s early interest on those who suffered and were excluded⁴⁷⁵, we move on to the second and later

⁴⁷¹ According to Kurski, further on Geremek only recalled his Jewish origins when he faced anti-Semitism, because he felt he shouldn’t remain passive, that it was his duty to stand on the side of those who were mistreated and discriminated (Kurski: “Bronisław Geremek...”). Geremek also tells Żakowski: “Je la porte [cette conscience juive, C.A.], elle apparaît chaque fois que la question de l’antisémitisme refait surface, que j’ai à faire face au chauvinisme ou au racisme”. Geremek: *La rupture...*, 109.

⁴⁷² Geremek: *La rupture...*, 105, also 106-107.

⁴⁷³ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 17. Also Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 42-43.

⁴⁷⁴ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 18.

⁴⁷⁵ If compared to other opposition intellectuals, it is worth noting some interesting similarities between Geremek’s and Władysław Bartoszewski’s biographies. Despite he was a Catholic, Bartoszewski had close contact with Warsaw’s Jewish population since he was a child. When he was a teenager, he had religious vocation and wanted to join a Jesuit religious community. He insisted, despite his short-sightedness, in performing his military service, for he wanted to be helpful and couldn’t remain indifferent to what surrounded him (July-August 1939). After his internment in Auschwitz, he became a collaborator of the Polish Underground Government and member of AK, contributed to the establishment of the Council to Aid Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom) and documented the Nazi crimes against Polish and Jewish-Polish population. In spite of the terrible things he experienced and witnessed during the Second World War, Bartoszewski reacted positively and hopefully: he believed that it was worth to be decent (“warto być przyzwoitym”) and that the help he had offered along his life, especially in 1939-1945, had always been returned to him. In PRL times he continued writing and talking about the communities of victims he belonged or felt especially attached to, that is, of the Second World War (civilians, Polish Jews, AK members...) and of Communist Poland. (Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*) Bartoszewski’s works

aspect of his biography we want to highlight: how his historical worries took him to opposition politics and how politics, in its turn, altered and refined his perception of history.

In 1987, owing to the publication in French of his book *La potence ou la pitié: l'Europe et les pauvres du Moyen Âge à nos jours*⁴⁷⁶, which had been banned in Poland, Bronisław Geremek was interviewed, among others, by Michel Sot for the daily newspaper *Le Monde*. In the course of their talk, Geremek undertook a brief overview of his academic evolution and highlights.

As a beginner in the field of historiography in the 1950s, he felt (and still did) especially close to historical materialism and the *Annales* school, in particular to Jacques Le Goff, Émile Cornaet and Maurice Lombard, besides Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, all of whom he had the chance to meet personally for the first time (except, of course, for Bloch) either during his stay in Paris in April-November 1956 or further on, when he returned there with a stipendium of the École Pratique des Hautes Études's VI Section⁴⁷⁷ for the whole academic year 1957-1958. Geremek affirmed that, already back then, he had a research project about the poor in mind⁴⁷⁸. He also lived in Paris between 1962-65, when he was director of the Centre d'Études et de Civilisation Polonaise and taught at the Sorbonne University⁴⁷⁹. By the 1970s, he was not focusing so much on class structures as on the phenomenon of exclusion:

Marxiste, je cherchais une classe opprimée. Les Annales m'ont conduit aux comportements sociaux, à l'idée de pauvreté et à l'intérêt pour les groupes qui, selon le mot de Lucien Febvre, 'n'ont pas droit à l'histoire'. Depuis, je suis resté fidèle.

Ce fut donc d'abord *Le Salarial dans l'artisanat parisien aux XIIIe-XVe siècles* (1968), une étude économique du marché du travail, la recherche des pauvres en tant que classe. Cela me conduisit aux marginaux.⁴⁸⁰

Geremek defended his habilitation research in the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), which was published some years later in French as *Les marginaux parisiens aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (1976)⁴⁸¹. He then approached the tramp's life as a social phenomenon and, when he was correcting the proofs of his next book, in August 1980, got deeply involved in the workers' protests of the Gdańsk shipyards. Fortunately, thanks to the help of some French friends, the work managed to come out that same

include, among others: *Dni walczącej stolicy. Kronika Powstania Warszawskiego*, London/ Warszawa, Aneks/ Krag, 1984; *Los Żydów Warszawy 1939-1943*, [Warszawa], Międzyzakładowa Struktura "Solidarności", [1985] and under the pseudonym Jan Kowalski: *Metody i praktyki bezpieczeństwa w pierwszym dziesięcioleciu PRL*, [n.p.], Apel, 1986.

⁴⁷⁶ Also published a year before in Italian as *La Pietà e la forza: storia della miseria e della carità in Europa*, Roma, Laterza, 1986.

⁴⁷⁷ The future École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), since 1975.

⁴⁷⁸ About Geremek's inspiration, in terms of subject, in the Polish sociologist and engaged intellectual Stefan Czarnowski, and the latter's comments and concerns on the possible "use" of the outcasts in the interwar period by fascist ideologies, which somehow also links with Geremek's previous traumatic, first-hand experiences as a child: Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 21-22, 102.

⁴⁷⁹ I would like to thank Patryk Pleskot for solving my doubts about the specific periods of time that Bronisław Geremek spent in France before 1968.

⁴⁸⁰ "Les pauvres aussi ont 'droit à l'histoire'" [interview to Bronisław Geremek by Michel Sot], *Le Monde*, 20-XI-1987, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9. Also Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 21-22.

⁴⁸¹ *Ludzie marginesu w średniowiecznym Paryżu: XIV-XV wiek*, Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich - Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1971.

year⁴⁸². Now, in 1986-87, Geremek believed that *La potence ou la pitié* showed his professional progress in the following way:

J'ai le sentiment que les instruments habituels de compréhension historique ne suffisent pas à rendre compte du passé dans son épaisseur. Je porte un grand intérêt aux valeurs spirituelles dans les comportements sociaux qui ne se laissent pas réduire à des mécanismes simples.

J'ai dès le début participé au séminaire de Michel Mollat à la Sorbonne sur les pauvres. Son enquête a eu l'immense mérite d'associer le spirituel, le culturel et le social pour donner aux pauvres un véritable 'droit à l'histoire'.⁴⁸³

It is something frequent that opposition *intelligenci* identify historical materialism with a historiographical practice which only takes on account purely economic and socio-economic aspects of the past, that is, the *base* or *infra-structure* part of human society according to Marxist theory (forces and relations of production), neglecting thus the *super-structure*, which included, among others, culture, politics or religion. Geremek would also insist on this further along in his life, for instance when he spoke about the French history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*) with Duby and the journalist Philippe Sainteny⁴⁸⁴.

Patryk Pleskot maintains this is an excessively schematic view of orthodox Marxism, and resorts to the Marxist saying "existence forms consciousness", as well as to the example of the renowned *annaliste* Georges Duby, to show that it was perfectly within orthodoxy to turn towards the study of mentalities (*mentalités*) starting from a socio-economic paradigm⁴⁸⁵. We will point out later as well that, despite the changes undergone during the Stalinist period and the *taboo* contemporary topics, Polish historiography during PRL times remained in essence quite classic methodologically and thematically speaking (Chapter 4).

However, oppositionists like Geremek or Holzer had experienced first-hand precisely all the major, harshest changes of the 1940s and 1950s at Polish universities, before actually becoming dissidents. Later on, it was for them not just a combat against bad *praxis* (i.e. not practicing what was preached, or doing just the opposite), but also against part of the theory, its imposed character⁴⁸⁶ and ideological misuse, or its unsuitability for Polish case and epistemological disadvantages, even if it was only very rarely applied down to the last consequences in Polish academia⁴⁸⁷. Besides, it is undeniable that the main collective actor in history for classic Marxism is the proletariat, whereas Geremek's tramps and prostitutes were, in the eyes of Communist politicians, not so "convenient" or even worth studying, because they didn't form a class or have class consciousness anyway. Worse still: they were a problem, even a kind of threat, for the State.

⁴⁸² *Inutiles au monde: truands et misérables dans l'Europe moderne, 1350-1600 présenté par Bronislaw Geremek*, [Paris], Gallimard, 1980.

⁴⁸³ "Les pauvres aussi ont..."

⁴⁸⁴ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 65-66. Similarly: Michnik, "Shadows of Forgotten...". For different reinterpretations of the most common Marxist principles, see chapter 2.

⁴⁸⁵ PLESKOT, Patryk: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi. Kontakty historyków polskich ze środowiskiem "Annales" 1945-1989*, Warszawa, IPN, 2010, 579.

⁴⁸⁶ Geremek himself describes it several times as a "political and ideological imprisonment", despite he reckons that that first decade was also a good, effervescent moment in the field of history thanks in part precisely to Marxism. It had thus a dual character: "il [le marxisme, C.A.] était la nouvelle inspiration et, en même temps, déjà une sorte d'emprisonnement idéologique et politique". Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 14, also 15.

⁴⁸⁷ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 108; Geremek: "Pologne...", in Burguière (dir.): *Dictionnaire des sciences...*, 528-533; Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 27-28, 73-75.

During his interview with Michel Sot, Geremek maintained that the sixteenth century in Europe was a turning point in terms of policies and attitudes towards the poor and rejected: from then on, the new-born modern State took charge of them, decided who it would help or make work, expelled foreigners and eventually confined them. Reflecting about who were and are the poor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he concluded: “Je suis passé d’une question médiévale à une interrogation de fond sur la naissance de la société contemporaine et de ses attitudes sociales en face de la pauvreté”⁴⁸⁸.

Nevertheless, when Sot suggested him that his works might be considered a slap on the wrist for the West, and he himself as a “witness from abroad” or the “explorer of the West’s bad conscience”, Geremek apparently answered on the defensive. The attempt to interpret his historical researches politically bothered him, he said. He wondered (rhetorically) whether the wish to form a medieval- and Christian-inspired community or a complete distrust towards the State could be found in his book. However, he added: “C’est en tout cas notre principal problème à nous, Polonais d’aujourd’hui: comment sauver une vie communautaire contre l’État qui la détruit”⁴⁸⁹. Somehow, probably unconsciously, or perhaps in a calculated way, we cannot know for sure⁴⁹⁰, Geremek sewed together with the thread of his concern about the State institution what he had at first wanted to keep clearly separate: past and present, historical practice about European Medieval-Modern Ages and Polish politics.

About four or five years later, in other interviews, Geremek himself would admit this connection, regarding his life as a “flowing whole” this time. “On ne peut pas faire ce découpage Geremek historien et Geremek politique. Je pense que j’ai essayé de forcer cette image”, he told Philippe Sainteny⁴⁹¹, whereas Mary Blume reported:

Looking back, he [Geremek] says it was normal that he should become a labor organizer and resistant to Poland’s totalitarian regime, although for a long time he tried to separate his work as a historian from his political engagement.

«I remember being annoyed that an Italian historian said he found Geremek the politician in my history of poverty. Then I realized he was right because he said he found in my book a certain distrust of power and the state. It is this distrust that drew me into the resistance and that makes my present life as politician difficult.»⁴⁹²

As it happens with many other personal memories (though collective at bottom, as Maurice Halbwachs pointed out⁴⁹³), Geremek pictured his private and public life until then as a coherent ensemble which underwent a completely logical and “natural” evolution. Changes would have always been motivated, paradoxically, by the same immutable principles, such as a sense of justice, solidarity with the victims and, mainly, search for the truth. In his conversation with Sot, Geremek still linked the latter with the attempt to keep his political activities separate from his academic life though, curiously enough, it is precisely this interest in truth what drew them so close together:

⁴⁸⁸ “Les pauvres aussi ont...”.

⁴⁸⁹ “Les pauvres aussi ont...”.

⁴⁹⁰ On that score, Geremek’s brother considered that “we belonged to different worlds. His field was politics, and mine... manual labor. I told him so frequently. Every time we met, around twenty minutes elapsed before Bronek changed his ways. Every word was well-thought, analyzed, weighed. Some time had to go by for him to confide in somebody and be spontaneous” (“Mój wielki brat”, my transl.).

⁴⁹¹ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 153, also 42-45.

⁴⁹² Blume: “In Poland...”. Also Geremek: “Dwa narody”, 10-11, 6.

⁴⁹³ HALBWACHS, Maurice: *La memoria colectiva*, Zaragoza, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004 (1968). First edition in French, without biographical introduction and Annex with the article “La mémoire collective chez les musiciens”: *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950 (published by Jeanne Halbwachs Alexandre).

Je reste un historien. L'homme politique que je suis devenu cherche à ne pas mêler les divers domaines, la recherche scientifique et la vie politique. Il est important que le travail intellectuel se fasse en toute rigueur et que l'historien ne fasse pas du passé une leçon pour le présent. Ce qu'il apporte, c'est la recherche de la vérité comme une valeur fondamentale. C'est cet engagement moral qui m'a amené, malgré moi, à la politique. Dans les situations où j'ai dû jouer un rôle politique, j'ai placé la vérité comme valeur de départ alors qu'en politique on se sert de la vérité.

(...) Ce n'est pas très politique, mais c'est pour moi [la recherche de la vérité, C.A.] une exigence morale très profonde, qui est intimement liée à ma formation et à mon métier d'historien⁴⁹⁴

This same pattern can be found in the memories and explanations of other opposition *inteligenci*, who usually match a profile of professional historians and former members of the PZPR until at least 1968, like Krystyna Kersten, Tadeusz Łepkowski, Jerzy Jedlicki and Jerzy Holzer⁴⁹⁵. Therefore, we can infer the existence of a shared “historian-*intelligent*-dissident memory” among them, based on the permanence of principles, which stem from their previous (sometimes religious) education and professional code of ethics, against the mutability of events and circumstances. Despite their past failures, misjudgments or mistaken choices, these *inteligenci* felt they remained, in essence, the same as they had always been⁴⁹⁶.

If appraised this way, knowledge, “passive” consciousness and critical historical thought would stand only one step away from action, “active” consciousness and making history, as in Benjamin's Theses, where “the role of the historian and of the historical agent approach and even mingle”. The idea that some outstanding, leading Polish opposition *inteligenci* “... are trying to understand history and to make it”⁴⁹⁷ was already a widespread, nice sounding *cliché* in the international media by the 1980s. Concerning solely Geremek, Timothy Garton Ash wrote in an article for *The Spectator*, which criticized the former's dismissal from PAN in late April 1985, that, “suddenly, [in August 1980] the historian found himself making history”, whereas in August 1989 Anthony Lewis headed his brief comment in *The International Herald Tribune* “Now this Polish historian is helping to make history”. A little later, in February 1992, Mary Blume pointed out that “Geremek will be 60 years old next month and would like to go back to studying history rather than making it”⁴⁹⁸.

Apparently, everything falls into place: because of his traumatic childhood experiences, his commitment and sensitivity towards those who are excluded and suffer⁴⁹⁹, plus his professional and political choices, the combination of reflection, awareness and action suits Bronisław Geremek's biography particularly well. However, it seems he also felt certain unease due to the “incompatibilities” he perceived between his academic and his political posts. To act according to the rules of one challenged the way of acting in the other, and vice versa. Up to now we have seen how, in Geremek's

⁴⁹⁴ “Les pauvres aussi ont...”. Geremek refers to his job or profession as a historian with the expression “métier d'historien”, as in Marc Bloch's key work *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1949. It was published in English as *The historian's craft*, New York, Knopf, 1953.

⁴⁹⁵ Holzer was the single one of these four who, after hesitating, decided not to leave the Communist Party in 1968. He remained a member until more than a decade later, in 1979, when he engaged with opposition activities. Holzer's interview with Magdalena Bajer: “Nie przeżyłem rewizjonizmu. Rozmowa z profesorem Jerzym Holzerem”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 62-63, 66-67.

⁴⁹⁶ For instance, Jedlicki in “Nie marksizm mnie uwiódł...”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 87-88.

⁴⁹⁷ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 201 and 224 respectively, my transl.

⁴⁹⁸ GARTON ASH, Timothy: “The Making of Polish Prussia”, *The Spectator*, 4-V-1985; LEWIS, Anthony: “Now this Polish historian is helping to make history”, *The International Herald Tribune*, 25-VIII-1989; Blume: “In Poland...”.

⁴⁹⁹ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 42-43.

view, his search for the truth as a historian influenced his political stance and eventually led him to active commitment. But how did politics, in turn, affect his historical perception?

First of all, we have to bear in mind Geremek's admiration and close relation with the *Annales* School. He arrived as a young BA to the VI Section for "Economic and Social Sciences" of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1956, when Fernand Braudel took full charge of the institution after Lucien Febvre's decease, and also when Polish-French academic relations began to increase after the Second World War and the Stalinist period. It appears that he had an outstanding ability to make new contacts and to befriend his French teachers and colleagues, especially Braudel himself, Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff. After his long-term stay in France in the 1950s, Geremek also acted as the "host", in the name of the IH PAN and the UW respectively, of professors Braudel (1958) and Duby (1960) when they were invited to Warsaw; that is, he was the young researcher in charge of looking after them during their visit⁵⁰⁰.

According to Patryk Pleskot's Ph.D. research results, the real influence of *Annales* within Polish academia in 1945-1989 wasn't as direct, widespread or relevant as one might be inclined to think in the light of some Polish scholars' demonstrations of support and adherence to it back then. For example, to put it in figures, out of the eight Polish historians who took part in a collective work dedicated to Braudel in the 1970s⁵⁰¹, only Bronisław Geremek's text contained frequent and clear allusions to French historiography. However, in his work *Les marginaux parisiens aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, which earned the esteem and recognition of the *Annales* circle, the references to "classic" historians outnumbered those consecrated to *annalistes*⁵⁰². Although, in my opinion, quantitative methods on their own fail to provide a complete picture of a qualitative phenomenon, such as the impact a movement or a trend might have in somebody's life and thought, in this case they nevertheless contribute to reinforce the previously stated conclusion. The *Annales* School's influence on Polish award holders at the EPHE/ EHESS was more of a civilization and cultural kind than of a scientific-methodological nature. In this sense, the *annaliste* ascendancy was an inspiration for many⁵⁰³.

We can appreciate this, for instance, with Braudel's "long term" approach⁵⁰⁴. In Philippe Sainteny's 1990-1992 series of interviews to Geremek and his friend Georges Duby, published together in the volume *Passions communes* (1992)⁵⁰⁵, Geremek thought that to be interested in history meant in the long run to look out more for similarities between past and present than for differences, and supported, together with his French colleagues Le Goff and Duby, that the Medieval Ages could actually extend till the eighteenth century⁵⁰⁶. The popularity of the *longue durée* in general in Poland was also considerable, in part due to the fact that it was officially well regarded. Throughout Communist times, many historians appropriated the idea and applied it to their researches. Pleskot considers that perhaps this loyalty to Braudel's proposal was one of the reasons why Polish and French historiographies began to move away from each other since the 1970s, for, while in France the "long term" dogma began to be put

⁵⁰⁰ Pleskot: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi...*, 159-162, 731-732; Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 23.

⁵⁰¹ *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel, 1. Histoire économique du monde méditerranéen 1450-1650* and 2. *Méthodologie de l'histoire et des sciences humaines*, Toulouse, Privat, 1973.

⁵⁰² Pleskot: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi...*, 721-722.

⁵⁰³ Pleskot: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi...*, 732-733, 747, in general 726-747.

⁵⁰⁴ BRAUDEL, Fernand: "Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée", *Annales ESC*, 6, 1958, 725-753.

⁵⁰⁵ Polish version: DUBY, Georges and GEREMEK, Bronisław: *Wspólne pasje*, rozmowę przeprowadził P. Sainteny, Warszawa, PWN, 1995.

⁵⁰⁶ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 36, 145-146.

into question and new historiographical trends turned to individuals, events and microhistory, in Poland the *longue durée* was frequently employed until the end of the PRL period and the latest currents were barely present⁵⁰⁷.

Through an anecdote occurred in 1979 between Geremek and Jacques Revel, Pleskot also shows that the fascination some Polish historians felt with *Annales* surpassed even that of the actual founders of the journal, since the former perceived the School as something legendary and “sacred” of its kind. Besides, the conviction that *Annales* had greatly influenced Polish historiography was seemingly an *a priori* dogma for Geremek, because the only proof he provided about this were his own academic experience and texts⁵⁰⁸.

Since we are dealing with self-perception, what is relevant for us is that Bronisław Geremek experienced a feeling of belonging, of personal and intellectual indebtedness and, last but not least, of friendship towards the *Annales* circle, apart from an especial attachment, as a self-declared Marxist and *Annales* admirer, to the idea of *longue durée*. However, in his opinion, the intense political activity he carried out since the 1980’s nuanced his historiographical convictions in some ways.

In his preface to the French edition of his interview *Rok 1989: Bronisław Geremek opowiada / Jacek Żakowski pyta*, which Geremek wrote in July 1991 (“Le défi”⁵⁰⁹), to mention the *Annales* School was certainly a must. Firstly, he explained that he hadn’t written anything about what happened in 1988-1989 before not only due to lack of time and his political commitments, but also because of his formation as a historian and his fascination with the *Annales* School. He claimed he had always taken on account that long processes, and not events, shaped history in the long run: “Fasciné depuis mes jeunes années par l’école des Annales, par les transformations des structures économiques, sociales et culturelles, j’ai été formé dans le dédain, voire le mépris des événements”. But, curiously, in the 1980s he found himself in the midst of a *histoire événementielle* which undoubtedly changed many things in Poland and its neighboring countries⁵¹⁰. As a historian, he weighed up phenomena from a distance and bears in mind underlying long-term processes; however, one of the demands of his work as a politician was precisely the opposite— immediacy; thus, he must also interpret and give a sense to ongoing events in order to be able to act:

L’interprétation des situations en cours faisait partie de mon travail. Les politiciens savent mieux que les historiens qu’il faut rationaliser les événements, non pas leur donner raison, mais leur attribuer un sens. L’essentiel est de le faire immédiatement, lorsque l’événement a lieu, car à ce moment-là l’interprétation devient un facteur d’action politique ou d’action tout court.⁵¹¹

Geremek aimed to harmonize the timings of two different professions, action and reflection, closeness and distance, the zoom-lens and the panorama. Allegedly, it was more through his political activity and his contact with journalists than through further

⁵⁰⁷ Pleskot: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi...*, 562-563.

⁵⁰⁸ In his article “Marc Bloch, historien et résistant” (*Annales ESC*, nr 5, 1986), he said he had been especially influenced by Bloch’s *La société féodale* and Braudel’s *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*. Pleskot: *Intelektualni sąsiedzi...*, 685. Geremek also referred to Braudel that same year, specifically to his proposal to differentiate between “capitalism” and “market”, in a speech delivered during the 50th anniversary of the French Catholic journal *Esprit*. Geremek: “Dwa narody”, 10.

⁵⁰⁹ “The challenge”. The challenge of Polish *transformacja*? The dangers and challenges of a democratic system in Poland? Or was his personal, previous professional position as a historian also being challenged by his demanding political duties?

⁵¹⁰ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 13.

⁵¹¹ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 13-14.

in-depth historical readings that he began feeling uncomfortable with a *longue durée* in which historical agents somehow “faded away” and lost their significance, fostering passiveness among people. Interestingly, Geremek had already referred to certain historiographical trends favoring passivity a few years before (1986), when writing about Polish historiography for the French dictionary of historical sciences directed by André Burgière. During the last third of the nineteenth century, he pointed out then, Warsaw School members opposed to Cracow School’s conservatism and to its justification of a passive attitude based on Polish history: “Les historiens de cette tendance [École de Varsovie] s’opposaient au conservatisme des historiens de Cracovie ainsi qu’à la justification d’une attitude de passivité qu’ils cherchaient à tirer de l’histoire de Pologne”⁵¹².

Without ever questioning the relevance of great underlying historical processes, or ignoring all the elements which simply escaped him despite its decisive character⁵¹³, Geremek also gave an important role to individuals and events, such as the ones of the year 1989, which upturned the situation of his country. This is how he explained why his 1990 interview turned on such a specific moment:

L’année 1989 mérite une place particulière dans les annales de l’histoire de l’Europe et du monde, tant par ses conséquences politiques que par les méthodes qui ont été employées. Une chance merveilleuse est apparue cette année-là pour l’Europe et le monde, alors qu’il n’était pas du tout évident que cela eût lieu à ce moment-là et de cette manière-là. En cette année 1989 sont aussi apparus des dangers et des menaces dont il n’est pas du tout certain que l’on ne pouvait pas les prévenir. L’histoire des longs processus et des longues durées incite à accepter les déterminismes et l’inertie de l’agir. Les systèmes politiques comme la civilisation naissent et disparaissent selon des délais variables. **Mais de ces différences dans le temps, dans l’espace, dans les formes, dépendent les destins des hommes et des générations.** Dans ce livre, nous évoquons un instant historique, une année et son histoire politique banale, terre à terre, une suite d’actions visant à réaliser ce qui était possible et de désillusions dues aux limites de ce qui ne peut se concevoir qu’au travers du concret des faits et des hommes.⁵¹⁴

Along the first part of his interview, Geremek pointed out three events and first-hand experiences which, in his opinion, made the difference for Poland and *Solidarność* in the late eighties: Firstly, the television debate between Lech Wałęsa and the chairman of the official All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) Alfred Miodowicz (November 30th, 1988), won by the former, broke the impasse of the preliminary discussions between *Solidarność* and the Polish government, and was a turning point in terms of public opinion, because *Solidarność* didn’t count then with the same massive support of 1980-1981 and Poles, despite wanting changes, also mistrusted them and grew impatient if they weren’t carried out soon⁵¹⁵. Secondly, Wałęsa’s visit to Paris in December 1988, accompanied by Geremek, was for the latter the beginning of the end of Communist system and the moment when he became fully conscious of the leading role *Solidarność* and Poland could play in the international arena:

C’était un moment où non seulement Solidarité, mais aussi la Pologne reprenaient la place qui leur revenait en Europe et dans le monde. En voyant Lech Walesa salué par la Garde républicaine française comme un chef d’État, en le voyant discuter avec les plus éminents politiciens français et les principaux politiciens mondiaux, **je me disais que je ne regrettais aucun des sacrifices que j’avais eu à faire pour pouvoir assister à cela.** Je n’oublierai jamais la conversation avec Sakharov et ce moment très particulier où, durant la conférence de presse qui terminait ce voyage,

⁵¹² Geremek: “Pologne...”, 523.

⁵¹³ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 13, 110.

⁵¹⁴ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 15, bold mine.

⁵¹⁵ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 43-49.

Lev Timofieïev a déclaré qu'il n'y aurait pas eu Gorbatchev et Sakharov à Paris sans Solidarité. N'oubliez pas qu'à ce moment-là on ne savait encore rien de la suite des événements ! Nous ignorions ce qui arriverait vraiment en Pologne et encore plus ce qui se passerait en Europe de l'Est.

Pour moi, c'était un moment de changement radical, en ce sens que, pour la première fois, je me rendais compte d'une façon aussi claire et aussi univoque que nous occupions une position particulière qui consistait à ouvrir la voie allant du communisme à l'eupéanisation de l'Europe orientale. Vous avez commencé notre entretien par août 1988, mais, pour moi l'année 1989 a débuté précisément à Paris à la mi-décembre 1988. **Il n'y aurait pas eu de perestroïka, de Gorbatchev sans Solidarité. Les mois suivants allaient allonger dramatiquement la liste des choses qui n'auraient pas eu lieu sans la Solidarnosc polonaise.**⁵¹⁶

Thirdly, the live television interview Geremek gave during that journey with Wałęsa was crucial in order to define clearly the position and roadmap of *Solidarność* in relation to Polish government, as well as to forge the image the West would have of *Solidarność* and the Polish situation in general, and thus its attitude towards it from then on. The interviewer asked Geremek about Polish Prime Minister Rakowski's recent statement to the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, denying *Solidarność* the chance of registering as a trade union, but offering the movement the possibility of becoming immediately a political party:

J'ai répondu alors que je m'attendais à ce que ce dirigeant changeât d'avis. Et tandis que je disais que je m'attendais à ce que Rakowski changeât d'avis, je savais que l'attitude de l'Occident à l'égard de Solidarité, et de tout ce que se passait en Pologne d'une manière générale, dépendait en grande partie de ma réponse. Je pris également conscience, d'une manière aiguë, de ce dont, d'une certaine manière, nous nous rendions déjà compte, à savoir qu'il ne pourrait pas y avoir d'accord entre Solidarité et le gouvernement de Rakowski, que nous ne pourrions pas nous entendre avec lui.

Sa position [de Rakowski, C.A.] changea pourtant beaucoup plus vite qu'on aurait pu s'y attendre, puisque ce fut fait alors que nous étions encore à Paris.⁵¹⁷

Perhaps the French title of the book, *La rupture*, didn't just refer to the end of Communist times in Poland, nor to the increasing distance between Geremek and Lech Wałęsa (who are portrayed in the cover of the French edition in very significant attitudes), but also to what Geremek perceived as his own, personal "rupture" with part of his previous intellectual basis, besides Marxism: that rooted in braudelian long term orthodoxy. A necessary split in order to provide Polish opposition movements and dissident *inteligencja*, hence his own life and choices, with a fertile meaning.

⁵¹⁶ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 47, bold mine.

⁵¹⁷ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 48.

Chapter 2

The nation seen by its representatives: opposition *inteligencja*'s view of Polish society

A) Polish nation's values and ideals

Regarding themselves as the representatives of morality and ideals in the public forum, opposition intellectuals were prone to believe that, beyond material, political or geographical considerations, it was a tradition of ethical behaviors what bound Poles together as a nation⁵¹⁸. For Adam Michnik, to act unselfishly in favor of the community to the point of sacrifice, plus respect for diversity and pluralism, were two of the best features of Polishness:

I believe that when we try to account for history by limiting ourselves to the various social and economic factors which condition human fate, none of these factors can answer the question of why Father Maksymilian Kolbe⁵¹⁹ or Janusz Korczak chose to die; or why in turn we surround their actions with such deep reverence.

Two nineteenth-century rebels, Jarosław Dąbrowski⁵²⁰ and Romuald Traugutt, who differed fundamentally in their ideas about ideological and political choices, nevertheless agreed on one thing: both were ready to bear witness to the highest national and human values —with their own blood. This readiness has shaped a particular ethos in the Polish tradition, the ethos of sacrifice, in whose name our grandfathers and fathers never stopped fighting for national and human dignity. And this ethos cannot be understood without acknowledging the constant presence of Christ in Polish spiritual life.

But this is not all. Also present in Polish culture there has existed the ethos of a multinational commonwealth constituted on the basis of tolerance and equality of nations. And even though in reality these ideals of equality and tolerance did not always prevail, still they always remained the dream of the best sons of this earth.⁵²¹

To a certain extent, critical *inteligencja*'s view of Polish society in PRL times resembled that which progressive *intelligentsia* had of the Russian and Baltic nation-people in the nineteenth-century tsarist empire. This is especially clear in the case of Decembrists⁵²², whose historical perception was pervaded with democratic tendencies.

⁵¹⁸ On the close connection between human rights, morality and the national question in Central East European opposition discourses, see Kopeček: "Human Rights...", 573-602.

⁵¹⁹ Father Maksymilian Kolbe (1894-1941): Franciscan father who volunteered to die in place of another camp inmate in Auschwitz. He was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1982.

⁵²⁰ Jarosław Dąbrowski (1836-1871): Polish left-wing independence activist and general. He was one of the leading conspirers of the "Red" faction of what later became the January 1863 Uprising, but was arrested in August 1862 and spent two years in Warsaw's Citadel (the city's jail). In 1864 he was sentenced to 15 years of forced labor. During his deportation journey to Siberia he managed to escape and emigrated to France. He died in battle as commander-in-chief of forces of Paris Commune.

⁵²¹ Michnik: "A Lesson...", 164-165, similarly Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 27, 45-47.

⁵²² Liberal and progressive members of the Russian army who, deeply affected by their experiences in the military campaigns against Napoleon, founded different reformist patriotic societies. The most moderate of them demanded the abolition of serfdom, equality before the law and a constitutional monarchy, whereas the most radical supported the establishment of a republic and the redistribution of the land among the peasants and the State. Despite they were firstly encouraged by the tsar Alexander I's attitude towards them, their activities were soon deemed too liberal and dangerous. The last years of Alexander I's reign were a return to conservatism and restriction. Their "Decembrist" name (*dekabristy* in Russian) refers to the revolt they started up in December 26th 1825, when they refused to swear allegiance to the new tsar Nicholas I, who assumed the throne after his brother Constantin removed from the line of succession. The uprising was violently suppressed by loyal troops that same night.

For instance, they described the Russian people as rebellious and fond of freedom and admired Cossack traditions, together with their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century revolts; or they idealized the Medieval republics of Novgorod and Pskov and praised past institutions such as Novgorod's assembly (*veche*) and the Polish-Lithuanian parliament (*sejm*). The romantic idea about the existence of a government of the people in Eastern Europe previous to the German *Drang nach Osten* became very popular too in the first half of the century. At the bottom of this perception lay the conviction that ordinary people were the concealed, mysterious force that pushed national history forward⁵²³.

How was this “mysterious force” conceived by Polish intellectuals in our case?

A.1) *The origins: Western culture, Catholicism and the Commonwealth*

That Poland belonged to Europe, or, more specifically, to Western European culture, was one of the axioms with which almost every oppositionist agreed⁵²⁴. In the eyes of Andrzej Micewski, Polish identity (*tożsamość*) shared values and traditions with the rest of the continent (freedom, dignity, humanism...), as well as hopes and expectations. Hence, Poland's roots should not be just a question of the past: historical consciousness wouldn't make any sense if it didn't focus on the future too⁵²⁵. In one of the first numbers of the quarterly underground journal *Krytyka*, Marek Beylin, Konrad Bieliński and Adam Michnik expressed similar views on that score:

Poland lies in Europe. This statement is not a Eurocentric fit. It doesn't mean either that Poland's fate is going to be determined solely in a European scenario, nor that we believe that only the European cultural sphere produced values worth respecting. It is simply a reminder: Polish culture is a fragment of European culture, it is connected, more than with anything else, with its supreme values, with the ethos enrooted in the Ancient World and Christianity, as well as in the ideas of the Great French Revolution—freedom, equality, fraternity. It is —finally— a way to express our faith in the permanent link that joins Poland's destiny to Europe's destiny.⁵²⁶

For many *inteligenci*, “Europeanness” basically implied the establishment of a hierarchy of common values. Besides the three above-mentioned authors, PPN members and collaborators also believed that these principles dated back to Antiquity and to the origins of Christianity, and that they had been completed through the struggles for human rights along the last two hundred years, though unfortunately this didn't mean they had always been respected or even put into practice. The old terms of 1789's frustrated emancipation project (“freedom”, “equality”, “fraternity”)⁵²⁷ returned loaded with a “new” meaning, in a new context of dominion and submission. But they were not

⁵²³ Figes: *El baile...*, 187-190; Billington: *El icono...*, 385-389.

⁵²⁴ And not just internal opposition: such perception about Europe and “Europeanness” is centuries old. Törnquist Plewa: “The Complex...”. Drawing closer to our time in search of immediate precedents, it was present in Polish post-1945 émigré circles. There is, thus, a clear continuity in this respect. WIERZBICKI, Andrzej: *Europa w polskiej myśli historycznej i politycznej XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa, Centrum Europejskie Natolin / Trio, 2009; *Polskie wizje Europy w XIX i XX wieku* (wyb. Peter Oliver Loew), Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004; STOBIECKI, Rafał: *Klio na wygnaniu. Z dziejów polskiej historiografii na uchodźstwie w Wielkiej Brytanii po 1945 r.*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2005.

⁵²⁵ MICEWSKI, Andrzej: “Tożsamość i różnicowanie kultury”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 12-III-1978, 1.

⁵²⁶ BEYLIN, Marek, BIELIŃSKI, Konrad and MICHNIK, Adam: “Polska leży w Europie”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 5, 1979, 1, my transl.

⁵²⁷ Also in the core of Walter Benjamin's thought, as we pointed out in Chapter 1. Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 177.

the single ones: truth⁵²⁸, justice and human dignity were vital and timeless imponderables for oppositionists as well, together with pluralism and, above all, individual freedom⁵²⁹.

The identification of Poland with Western European culture was regarded positively because it acted as a self-defensive recourse against two dangerous albeit opposite tendencies: acculturation and nationalism. In the first place, Poland belonged since the Middle Ages to the Latin-Catholic cultural sphere, and its position within it strengthened each time the country faced a foreign threat, such as the attacks of Ottoman troops or the expansion of the Grand Principality of Moscow, under Byzantine and Tartar influence back then. Later on, in the nineteenth century, the “Germanization” and “Russification” attempts of the Prussian and Tsarist empires became the primary menace for the partitioned Polish lands. Finally, Polish culture’s latest enemy was the still ongoing “Sovietization” initiated in the second half of the twentieth century. Many intellectuals believed that the only “weapon” powerful enough to overcome these recurrent hazards for Poland’s existence was the Western European supra-community of shared values⁵³⁰. The fact that Western Europe’s arms and ammunition didn’t play any relevant role in the Eastern Bloc crises, whereas Western ideals did, was used to ratify the accuracy of their assessment and the mightiness of the immaterial over the material:

Les arsenaux militaires de l’Occident n’ont joué aucun rôle dans chacune des grandes crises qui ont secoué le monde communiste ou l’empire soviétique: ni en 1953, lors des événements de Berlin, ni en 1956, lorsque la Hongrie et la Pologne criaient leur soif de liberté, ni en 1968, au moment du printemps de Prague, ni en 1980, dans l’élan de Solidarité et dans son écrasement, le 13 décembre 1981. En revanche, ce qui ne fut pas sans impact fut quelque chose que dans le langage politique routinier on peut qualifier d’“idéal occidental” et qui, en apparence, se composait d’un assemblage de valeurs anciennes, obsolètes, empruntées à la tradition européenne: la liberté, les droits privés et collectifs de l’individu, la justice des gouvernements de droit, la démocratie indirecte et directe et, la dernière mais non la moindre, la société civile.⁵³¹

In the second place, Poland’s cultural links with Western Europe were also seen as the best “weapon” to fight against the intolerant tendencies contained in nationalist myths, which fueled the idea of Polish exclusiveness and the rejection of any supposedly “foreign” traditions⁵³². Interestingly, in PRL’ times chauvinist myths were not just an extremist or populist reaction against the threat of Communism and “Sovietization”, which would have been in any case thoroughly repressed, but basically the product of Soviet dominion itself: Polish Communist authorities tried to legitimize their power through nationalist watchwords and a pseudo-patriotic patina, resorting even to interwar right-winged political guidelines such as National Democracy’s (a single nation within the State, national unity, anti-German postulates...), especially when they felt their hegemonic position was seriously endangered⁵³³. Thus, rather than complete opposites, acculturation and nationalism were most probably perceived by critical *inteligenci* as two different anti-democratic strategies to ensure Poland’s *de facto*

⁵²⁸ More on truth and authenticity in Chapters 1 and 4.

⁵²⁹ PPN, “Polska i Europa”, in *Polskie wizje Europy...*, 194-196; LIPSKI, Jan Józef: “Czy Polska leży w Europie?”, in HOLZER, Jerzy *et al.*: *Myśli o naszej Europie*, Warszawa, Profil, 1988, 32; Micewski: “Tożsamość...”, 1-2; SMOLAR, Aleksander: “Prosta i koło: o dynamice systemu komunistycznego”, in 1956. *W dwadzieścia lat później z myślą o przyszłości*, London, Aneks, 1978, 96.

⁵³⁰ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 48; Lipski: “Czy Polska leży...?”, in Holzer *et al.*: *Myśli o naszej...*, 27; Micewski: “Tożsamość...”, 2.

⁵³¹ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 17.

⁵³² Lipski: “Czy Polska leży...?”, 27; PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 195-196.

⁵³³ Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja...*

dependence on the USSR, and hence “Europeanness” as the most effective way to counter-balance them.

In the same vein, opposition intellectuals insistently assured that it was perfectly possible to belong to a broader community (Europe) without losing one’s own idiosyncrasy (Polish nation’s). For instance, Jan Józef Lipski believed that, paradoxically, Poland developed its most original ideas in the periods when it was most influenced by the rest of European countries, such as medieval times, the Renaissance and the nineteenth century. The enrichment, of course, would be mutual, for only through cultural exchange could the rest of Europe get to know outstanding Polish thinkers, painters or writers, like Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki⁵³⁴.

But, as we hinted before, not all spheres of Polish life could be considered completely “European”: “In terms of regime, [Poland] is not [European]; the content of its traditions, yes; social relations, only partially; the aspirations of the majority of its inhabitants, to a considerably higher degree; its institutions, besides the Catholic Church and some cultural artistic societies, almost not; the daily activity of thinkers, artists, writers, priests, much more”⁵³⁵. The fact that only the Communist apparatus was emphatically described as *not* European, followed by public institutions, and that the rest of the categories lay closer to “Europeanness” suggests a combination of transition and impotence. Starting with the latter, and according to PPN members, the only system in harmony with the above-mentioned values was a parliamentary, democratic and liberal regime. However, given Poland’s unfavorable geopolitical situation, such a regime was generally deemed unattainable in the short or even medium term; as a result of this, other *inteligenci* like Andrzej Micewski feared that Poland would be “shut out” from Europe in the meantime, so they invoked another European value— political pluralism, and argued that the choice of system was, for the moment, beyond Poles’ will⁵³⁶.

As for transition, Tadeusz Łepkowski thought that Poland usually displayed an intermediate or borderline position between East and West along its history and that in present time its inhabitants were still influenced by both models in politics, social organization, mentalities and culture. In his view, the “Western way of life” was based on individualism, freedom and democracy, whereas populist egalitarianism, a liking for titles, social distances, gradations and ritualistic celebrations, such as army parades, drew Poles closer, after forty years in the Communist Bloc, to Eastern traditions⁵³⁷. A transitional condition meant that Poland could sometimes lean more towards the West, but also towards the East, and that Poles should assume their uniqueness in this sense and find their own development path without attempting to imitate others:

We cannot change our geographical location. It is necessary thus to say something once again. Poland never was and will never be completely ‘western’ or completely ‘eastern’. It will be itself. It is a bit like that poem by Gałczyński about our national flag, about the banner that will never be white and will never be red⁵³⁸. It is and will be red and white⁵³⁹, and it cannot be otherwise. We

⁵³⁴ Lipski: “Czy Polska leży...?”, 29; Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, in Lipski: *Powiedzieć sobie wszystko...*, 70-72.

⁵³⁵ PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 195, my transl.

⁵³⁶ PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 195; Micewski: “Tożsamość...”, 1; Micewski: “W przeszłość...”, 8.

⁵³⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 3-4, 39-40.

⁵³⁸ Łepkowski refers to the poem “Pieśń o fladze”, written in Autumn 1944, after the defeat of Warsaw Uprising, by the poet Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (1905-1953) during his internment in the Stalag XI-A, a Nazi camp for prisoners of war located southwest from Berlin, known as Altengrabow to the Poles. Here is part of a stanza: “And you will never be white,/ and you will never be red/ you will remain red and white/ like a great crazy dawn,/ red like a goblet of wine, / white like an avalanche of snow, / the

can curse our 'transitional' heritage, but we cannot free ourselves or keep away from it. Sadness, greatness, singularity and uniqueness intertwine in it. Poland must not copy the West, not the East. When it has done so, submitting itself, it has been defeated. Poland is doomed to originality. I fear it is also doomed to loneliness among the elements which are close to it, but are at the same time foreign.⁵⁴⁰

Nevertheless, behind Łepkowski's pessimistic and fatalistic tone it is fairly easy to "pick up" a lament about Poland's political captivity, as well as a wish to get rid of the ballast of Eastern "bad habits"; though, of course, the country's Communist period (once it was over) would remain in its annals and, to a certain extent, shape its future.

We now move on to the other two fundamental pillars of Polish culture, from which, according to Michnik, stem the spirit of sacrifice on behalf of the community and pluralism, respectively: Catholicism and the political ethos of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth period.

Communist authorities' plans to destroy previous social structures and monopolize collective memory rendered worse results in Poland than in neighboring countries. This was due, on the one hand, to the peasants' resistance to the collectivization of agriculture and, on the other, to the preservation of Polish Catholic Church's strength and independence.

After a relatively open and tolerant sixteenth century, the almost simultaneous defense against Islam, Orthodoxy and Lutheranism transformed Polish Catholicism into a fighting borderline religion. Many of its actual characteristics developed, according to *inteligenci*, precisely between Counter-Reform times and the nineteenth century. These included ceremonialism, a strong faith that sometimes degenerated into fanaticism, a deep-rooted cult to Virgin Mary, a great influence of religious orders on the organization of believers' everyday life, a certain feeling of religious superiority and, in general, a poorly educated clergy, theologically speaking.

Given this description, one might be inclined to think that Catholic faith in Poland was rather banal or superficial; however, Jerzy Holzer believed that the popular, ritualistic and traditional features present in Polish Catholicism were a reaction and served as a kind of shield against the repeated persecutions the Church and the Polish people experienced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the lands under Prussian control, the Russification campaigns of the Romanov empire, the Polish-Bolshevik War or the Second World War. Rituals, for instance, became the best way to stage national-religious survival and give testimony in a large scale, linking the Messianic readiness for further redemptive sacrifices with pleads to God to console those who suffered and protect those who were fighting. As a consequence, through symbols, ceremonies and patriotic songs, among others, Catholicism gradually identified itself with a patient and sorrowful nation that wanted to preserve its essence and create an independent state, though (or maybe precisely because) this complex and painful process was never successfully culminated—at least until 1918⁵⁴¹.

Despite the preeminent role of Catholic faith in Polish patriotism, Jan Józef Lipski, in his characteristically critical and pluralistic spirit, also wanted to remind his readers about other branches of Christianity that contributed to the formation and

most loved, the nicest,/ red and white" (my transl., C.A.). An interesting website about his life and works, both in Polish and English: <http://kigalczynski.republika.pl/english/main.html>

⁵³⁹ In Polish the order of the colors is the opposite: biało-czerwona (white and red).

⁵⁴⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 4, my transl.

⁵⁴¹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 35-37; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 49-50; Micewski: "Naród i państwo", 1-2; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 136; Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 84.

preservation of Poland's ethos from early Modern to Contemporary times, something they frequently paid with their own lives:

What is non-Catholic in Polish history and tradition? Leaving aside the episodes that hardly influenced the course of our history, like for instance the Polish Hussite movement — we must start with Polish traditions of the Reformation and Protestantism. In the 16th and 17th centuries there were traditions like Mikołaj Rey's⁵⁴² and the Polish Brethren's⁵⁴³, traditions based on the tolerant co-existence of different creeds, which were ratified in the Act of Warsaw Confederation⁵⁴⁴. We do not lack Protestants among our national heroes (for example, general Sowiński⁵⁴⁵), we do not lack Protestant pastors among Polish national activists.

It is certainly true that the Catholic Church played a very important role in the preservation of Polishness, especially in the Prussian part of Poland and in the far-away borderlines of the Russian part. But in Cieszyn Silesia and Masuria⁵⁴⁶ protestant evangelic communities and their ministers took care of polishness. The last national heroic act of Polish evangelists was the martyrdom of unyielding pastors and activists during the Nazi occupation. The surname Bursche is symbolic in this sense⁵⁴⁷, but it is not the single one. The contribution of Polish Protestants to Polish culture and to the fight for the nation's ethos is so big that any attempt to exclude them from our Polish national community must raise strong opposition.⁵⁴⁸

Since the mid-1940s, the Church became not just a space to develop one's faith but, most importantly, a sphere of freedom of speech and free memory in face of Stalinism and Communist rule, providing "a true barrier against the totalitarian power" and enjoying society's trust⁵⁴⁹. As a social institution, it managed to preserve its organization and moral independence after 1956 and avoided collaborating with the authorities, unlike other churches in the Communist Bloc. In contrast with its public position during the Interwar period, once the Second World War was over the Polish Church unflinchingly adopted fundamental human rights as its own (social justice, tolerance, freedom of conscience and expression) and continued safeguarding two basic elements of *inteligencja*'s ethos: firstly, the heroic halo surrounding opposition stances and the victims of sacrifice, which were vital in the struggle for the fatherland's freedom; and, secondly, the virtues based on service to society. This fostered a rapprochement between intellectual opposition's non-believers and Catholic institutions in the 1970s. Of course, as it happened in partition times and other moments of Polish history, the attitude of Church representatives towards protests and opposition initiatives

⁵⁴² Mikołaj Rey (1505-1569) was one of the most outstanding poets and writers of the Polish Renaissance, as well as politician and musician. He was the first author to write exclusively in Polish language and is considered one of the founders of Polish literary language and literature. In the decade of the 1540s he converted to Calvinism.

⁵⁴³ Also known in Polish as "Arians" or "Socinians", the Polish Brethren were members of the Minor Reformed Church of Poland, a Nontrinitarian Protestant church that existed in Poland from 1565, when it split with Calvinism, till 1658, when the Arians were expelled from the country by the Polish parliament.

⁵⁴⁴ Signed on January 28th 1573, the Warsaw Confederation Act extended religious tolerance to nobility and free persons of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was the first document of its kind in Europe. See further below for more on that period of Poland's and Lithuania's common history.

⁵⁴⁵ Józef Sowiński (1777-1831) was artillery general and one of the heroes of the November 1830 Uprising, who perished defending Warsaw against the Russian assault.

⁵⁴⁶ Two Polish regions. The first, shared by Poland and the Czech Republic, is located in south-easter Silesia. The second, in northern Poland, was part of the ancient territories of Eastern Prussia and is famous for its multiple lakes.

⁵⁴⁷ The Bursches were a well-known family of Polish evangelists. Its members generally devoted themselves to liberal or religious professions, and many of its male relatives, sons of the minister and vicar of Zgierz Ernest Wilhelm Bursche (1831-1904), were killed during the War or died in Nazi concentration camps.

⁵⁴⁸ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 69, my transl.

⁵⁴⁹ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 46 and 58-60.

could vary substantially depending on the context, the hierarchical position and personal views, ranging from a completely open support to the usual cautiousness of its highest representatives⁵⁵⁰.

In any case, critical non-believers greatly valued Catholic Church's contribution to promote a freer and fairer society. In Michnik's opinion, during the 1980s the Church should develop educational activities (not political) and disseminate a kind of "civic catechism" among the population. Besides this, it was specific help and protection what made its initiatives so important: "The Church's concrete actions —defense of those who have been wronged and humiliated, assistance to the persecuted and their families, public defense of truth and concern for social peace— are major accomplishments in the life of the nation"⁵⁵¹. On the other hand, Lipski went back to the basics of Christianity, love and respect, as a way to prevent resentment, hatred and violence against other nations:

We belong to a cultural sphere whose ethical ideas were shaped mainly by Christianity. Believers and non-believers —we have been raised up in the commandment of love of one's fellow men, the basic moral signpost of our culture. (...)

I think that chauvinism, national megalomania, xenophobia, i.e. hatred towards anything that is foreign, national selfishness —contradict the commandment of love of one's fellow men. Patriotism, however, is in harmony with it. Just like specific love among a family should not be an obstacle to love our fellows, the specific love among the members of the same national community should follow the same superior moral rule. Patriotism comes from love, and to love it must return; any other of its shapes is an ethical deformation.⁵⁵²

Since the first decades of the nineteenth century, Polish thinkers turned their heads towards the past to look for the origins of their nation's ethos. This phenomenon, far from being exclusive, was in fact closely related to the historiographical development experienced simultaneously in the rest of the Russian Empire (the *intelligentsia*'s philosophical and metaphysical search of the "spirit" of the people)⁵⁵³, as well as within other European states. Joachim Lelewel's "democratic interpretation" of Polish history, for instance, tracked down the roots of the country's democratic principles back to Slavic prehistory and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and was in line with the ideas of other historians and "nation builders" such as the French Jules Michelet's (1798-1874) or the Czech František Palacký's (1798-1876). As a democratic politician, Lelewel wanted Poland to recover its independence through a revolution of European scope⁵⁵⁴. His views of the Commonwealth period, though with peaks and valleys in terms of popularity, have survived until today and imbued *inteligencja*'s reflections, especially in moments when, as in Lelewel's days, politics, opposition, history writing and memory became almost inseparable. Like in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as Commonwealth of Both Nations (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*), is the name given to the federation formed by the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland (*Korona Królestwa Polskiego*) and the Great Duchy of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė*) through the Union of Lublin in 1569. Prior to this, the Great Duchy and the Kingdom of Poland had already established a dynastic union (Union of Krewo, 1386) which brought about the conversion into Catholicism of the up to then multi-confessional Lithuanian Duchy. Despite the

⁵⁵⁰ Baczko: "Polska Solidarności...", 111; Bartoszek: "Habitus polskiej inteligencji...", 68; Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 136-138; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 36.

⁵⁵¹ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 58-60.

⁵⁵² Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 37, my transl.

⁵⁵³ Billington: *El icono...*; Figes: *El baile...*

⁵⁵⁴ Górny: "From the Splendid Past...", 107.

eventual deterioration of relations between both states and the attempts of the increasingly influential Lithuanian nobility to break the dynastic union, Muscovy's advance towards the West and its territorial conquests, with the subsequent loss of lands of the Duchy, led to a greater alliance with the Polish Kingdom which, by the mid-sixteenth century, finally materialized in the form of a Commonwealth. Within it, Lithuania had a government, an army and a treasury of its own, but it also had to transfer many of its territories to the Polish Kingdom and experienced a gradual process of Polonization. The federation system, headed by a single ruler elected by the noble parliament (*sejm*), lived flourishing times, but since the mid-seventeenth century its weaknesses and flaws became more evident: economic and political crises followed and it entered into the orbit of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century. The Union lasted nominally until the passing of the ephemeral Constitution of May 3rd, 1791, that attempted to carry out important reforms and improvements which were quite radical for their time, and was brought to an abrupt end by the division of the Commonwealth's lands between the Prussian, Austrian and Russian empires.

Among Polish oppositionists in Communist times, the Commonwealth of Both Nations was positively regarded due to its advanced socio-political principles, including considerable freedom, religious and ethnic tolerance and proto-democratic procedure. It was a unique aristocratic political system where any noble, regardless of his rank or economic position, enjoyed the same ample rights and privileges (Nobles' Democracy or Golden Liberty). All these features originated in the late Medieval Ages⁵⁵⁵ thanks to the gradual increase in number and importance of nobility (*szlachta*) and the relatively easy access to this status or to participation in public life:

The monarchy formed in the late Middle Ages already developed a certain system of social control over the government, though I admit that control is probably an exaggerated word. At the same time, already in the Middle Ages, the system of noble privileges was formed, including numerous layers of the population. Around 15% of adult men began to take part in public life, in the government⁵⁵⁶. A new, original conception of a state serving serfs-citizens, and later just citizens, was gradually established. The social basis of the Nobles' Democracy was broad, especially in the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. This democracy shaped for a long time the political culture and life philosophy not only of the hereditary nobility, but to a certain extent of the bourgeoisie too, and even of part of the peasantry in the 16th century, before the oligarchy of magnates made of democracy a purely ornamental category, transforming it into empty words and liberation discourses.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ In his underground booklet *Nasi ojcowie-założyciele* [Our founding fathers], Stefan Bratkowski tracked down the roots of what he calls the "Polish political doctrine", including principles such as the election of the monarch, the right of free Poles to oppose to a tyrannical and unfair king, the popular assembly of the most powerful (*Wielka*) as the only institution that could grant executive power, a republican model (common good above individual good), and even equality before the law. Closely related to the clashes between the Polish Kingdom and the Teutonic Knights, these political ideas could already be found, for example, in the works and thought of the historian and Cracow's bishop Wincenty Kadłubek (1161-1223), the rectors of the University of Cracow (now Jagiellonian University) Stanisław of Skarbimierz (1360-1431) and Paweł Włodkowic (ca. 1370-1435), their disciple and humanist Jan of Ludziska (ca. 1400-1460) or Kazimierz Jagiellończyk's and Jan I Olbracht's counsellor Jan Ostroróg (1459-1501). BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: *Nasi "Ojcowie-założyciele"*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Komitetu Kultury Niezależnej, 1985.

⁵⁵⁶ Percentages may vary according to the author: whereas Jan Józef Lipski increased the proportion up to 20% of the population, Jerzy Surdykowski estimated that it was about 10%, which is probably closer to reality. It is, in any case, a considerably high figure for those times. Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 28; SURDYKOWSKI, Jerzy: "Duch Rzeczypospolitej", in Holzer *et al.*: *Myśli o naszej...*, 51.

⁵⁵⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 11, my transl.

Concerning tolerance, both Stefan Bratkowski and Jan Józef Lipski agreed in describing Polish fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the Golden Age) as peaceful and calm if compared to the situation of other European states. Wars, bloodsheds, lawlessness and murders spread back then like an epidemic from Italian regions and the Balkans to Scandinavia and the Volga's riversides. In England, Henry VIII (1491-1547) disposed of his annoying former friends or wife of the moment by beheading them, whereas in Spain Jews were persecuted and thousands of people were burned at the stake by order of the Inquisition. On the other hand, in Polish lands nobody could be arbitrarily arrested and, when the Jewish quarter in Cracow was invaded, for instance, the city was fined for it and the perpetrators condemned. In sum, beliefs were not a major problem or a political obstacle:

St. Bartholomew's Days were unknown here. When Europe sank into religious wars and the principle *cuius regio eius religio* began to reign there, in Poland it was otherwise. The powerful king of united Poland and Lithuania, Sigismund II Augustus of the Jagiellonian dynasty, said proudly and decidedly: 'I am not the king of your consciences'. With the approval of the members of parliament of all creeds, the Sejm of 1573 passed an Act that made non-Catholics equal in rights to Catholics and promoted tolerance and lasting religious peace.⁵⁵⁸

"In the Golden Age everything was yet possible", Lipski asserted: "a Jew could be dubbed knight, a peasant could be one of the most outstanding poets of the time, and townspeople could become an intellectual and even political elite"; in other words, estate divisions were not insurmountable and social integration was a fact⁵⁵⁹.

The journalist and publicist Jerzy Surdykowski went even further in his analysis of the *Rzeczpospolita's* political characteristics, comparing them to a kind of presidential parliamentary democracy, for proto-constitutional laws, social agreements and a parliament (*sejm*) limited the executive power of the elected "president-king" who had sworn, in addition, to serve the interests of the noble electors and accepted being controlled by the citizens' representatives. Since the fifteenth century, three hundred years before Montesquieu's theories were published, Polish justice courts were already independent from the king, and the monarch and the noble estate kept separate treasuries. In order to pass new laws or carry out other important activities, the king should reach an agreement with the lower and the higher chambers of the *sejm*, that is, the *izba poselska* and the *senat*, respectively. Once the Jagiellonian dynasty extinguished (1386-1572), the now elected candidate to the Polish-Lithuanian throne had to swear respect, in the first place, to the Henrician Articles (*Artykuły Henrykowskie*)⁵⁶⁰—a fixed, permanent contract with the Polish nation-nobility to protect the latter's individual, political and economic rights and freedoms— and, in the second place, to the *pacta conventa*, which comprised the particular and variable undertakings that each king-elect accepted before being crowned. Together, the Articles and the *pacta* represented, according to Surdykowski, the first *de facto* Polish constitution⁵⁶¹.

This journalist also considered significant the change of name of the Polish Kingdom and the Lithuanian Duchy after the Lublin Union: though it is usually translated in English as "Commonwealth", in Polish *Rzeczypospolita* (or *Rzeczpospolita*) actually means "republic". The etymological link to Roman republican

⁵⁵⁸ Lipski refers to the aforementioned Warsaw Confederation Act. Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 28-29, my transl.; also Bratkowski: "Walka...", 19.

⁵⁵⁹ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 59, my transl.

⁵⁶⁰ After the name of the first elected king, Henry of Valois (1551-1589) who, after a few months in the Polish-Lithuanian throne (1573-1575), left the country to become Henry III of France.

⁵⁶¹ Surdykowski: "Duch Rzeczypospolitej", 50- 51.

traditions suggested the intention of regarding the State once again as a “public matter” (*res publica*) instead of as the monarch’s private property. On the other hand, despite the clashes between Polish and Lithuanian nobles were harsh and frequent along those centuries, Surdykowski preferred to focus on the pioneering character of the federal State, highlighting that it had been achieved through agreements and not by force or invasion⁵⁶², though Lithuanian history books will probably differ on the degree of compulsion and the general outcome of the Commonwealth period.

In any case, the main points that Surdykowski wanted to make in his essay had to do with the indigenous nature of the *Rzeczpospolita* phenomenon and, most importantly, with defeat, memory and survival.

As to the first point, the Commonwealth and its two precedent states turned out to be in practice more “Western” than Western Europe in the early Modern period, for they reformulated and applied ancient principles and imponderables that only later on began to be considered exclusively “Western European”. This way, “... the culture and civic consciousness of nobility became the basis upon which the Poles’ present-day national culture was built, together with their ideas about the State, its sovereignty, the democratic standards it must attain, about civil rights and duties”. “Therefore”, the author adds, “the dreams about *podmiotowość* (agency) and democracy have not been a Mediterranean illusion instilled into Central Europe”: the Polish ethos would have a perfectly legitimate, solid and autochthonous origin. Poland would belong to Europe in its own right, its strength and identity emanating essentially from within⁵⁶³.

The second key aspect Surdykowski approaches is directly connected with the title of his article (“The spirit of the Commonwealth”, “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”) and supports our research hypotheses concerning Walter Benjamin’s “Theses” in a similar way as Edward Abramowski’s case (Chapter 1)⁵⁶⁴. According to the journalist, the “spirit of the Commonwealth”, representing all the above-mentioned ideological and political features (tolerance, freedom, democratic principles and controls), was still alive. And it is not a mere gratifying *souvenir* because a fight for memory is taking place today, so to think about this period of Polish history, about this great albeit unsuccessful democratic experiment, is to remember the “defeated” —whom the “winners” want to slander and erase from history—, and what they defended —the values that are missing in the public life of the countries under Soviet dominion:

But after the ‘Republic of Nobles’ there remained in later Poland, toughly fighting against its Central European destiny, something more than the memory of yesterday’s excellence (...). ... speaking about the traditions of the Commonwealth we deal with the essence of Polish and Central European destiny today, with the mechanism of political cataclysms that are still ongoing and drag this part of Europe.⁵⁶⁵

A democratic society (or, in our case, one that aims to be such) is indebted to its fallen predecessors and has the capacity to redeem them:

We are responsible for past generations for two reasons: firstly, because our present is built upon their shoulders. There is a continuity between those who fought for democracy in the past and today’s democracy. Many had to perish and see how their ideals were defeated in order for us to live in democracy one day. What Benjamin tells us is that without remembrance and recognition of those deaths, we will never understand what we now enjoy. **Responsibility is not born out of metaphysical reflection (...), but out of historical consciousness.** The second reason is more

⁵⁶² Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 52.

⁵⁶³ Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 53 and 55 respectively, my transl.

⁵⁶⁴ Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 53-55.

⁵⁶⁵ Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 53, my transl., also 54.

mysterious: we have a messianic power —weak, but messianic— over the past that we must exercise if we want to be ourselves. Grandsons are responsible for the injustices committed against grandparents because grandsons have a messianic power over them which the latter are expecting us to exert. (...) the Messianism of that force comes from an echo of the past. The messianic power of grandsons over grandparents consists of the capability to answer their questions.⁵⁶⁶

Thus, a moral and historical imperative weighs upon people, even more so when democratic goals have not yet been attained and the fight is still ongoing. In that case, one must paradoxically remember the past in order to have hope, for “still unfulfilled ‘dreams’ of happiness palpitate in those places where the past lies asleep or unconscious and, if they awaken, they become the engine of action, they become an utopia”⁵⁶⁷.

Surdykowski compares and contrasts the “spirit of the Commonwealth” (*Duch Rzeczypospolitej*), which, following Benjamin’s premises, we may consider the “spirit of the defeated”, with the “spirit of the Congress of Vienna” (*Duch Kongresu Wiedeńskiego*), which is tantamount to the “spirit of the winners”. They are, therefore, radically incompatible. Along the early modern period, the “spirit of the Commonwealth” decayed and was finally brought to an end from abroad, when, after the regeneration attempt of 1791, the lands of the *Rzeczypospolita* were divided between three empires and Poland lost its statehood for one hundred and twenty-four years. Then, in the short period of 1919-1939, the Poles re-activated the Republic’s civic spirit (*duch obywatelskości*), though it had to struggle against the absurdities of nationalism and the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of rulers. The *coup de grâce* for this latest bid came, once again, from beyond Polish borders: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union allied to carry out the fourth partition of the country during the Second World War. As for today, Surdykowski explained, the “*Rzeczypospolita*” denomination is just a façade and the ruling Communist apparatus represents a considerably smaller percentage of the Polish population than the noble estate of the old *Rzeczypospolita*’s times.

On the other hand, the international order established by the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) is comparable to the resultant of the Conference of Yalta: as systems of “winners”, they ratified the dominion of despotic empires —four in the first case (Ottoman, Russian, Prussian, Austrian), only one, the USSR, in 1945— over other nations. Hence, the two most fruitful centuries for Western Europe (with scientific and technical revolution, building of democratic societies...) were the times when Polish pro-independence revolutions were crushed over and over again by the most antidemocratic and oppressive empires in the continent.

Despite these setbacks, the civic spirit of the Commonwealth remained an untransferable part of the consciousness of yesterday’s and today’s Poles, so that the prevailing order established by the “winners” never proved to be completely successful due to the former’s constant struggle with it: “The spirit of the Congress of Vienna had to provide Europe with great peace and stability, but rendered a continuous flow of Polish uprisings and pro-independence revolts, from Kościuszko’s uprising up to *Solidarność*”⁵⁶⁸. In Surdykowski’s opinion, a nation simply couldn’t react otherwise when it was forced to accept a State framework that didn’t match its historically-forged political and ethical consciousness. That could only entail counter-productive results:

Politics —as it is usually affirmed, following Machiavelli— has nothing to do with morality. But the history of the uneven combat of the *spirit of the Republic* against the *spirit of the Congress of Vienna* shows that immoral solutions, which violate the culture and consciousness of the nations

⁵⁶⁶ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 79-80, bold mine, C.A.

⁵⁶⁷ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 259, my transl.

⁵⁶⁸ Surdykowski: “*Duch Rzeczypospolitej*”, 54, my transl.

submitted to them, are effective only in the short term. Instead of development — [they achieve] stagnation, instead of richness — blood.⁵⁶⁹

In this sense, Poland was no exception: each country of the Eastern Bloc had its own historical road to democracy that must be re-discovered and followed. And, most importantly, one should never forget that the history of the “defeated”, what cannot be touched or seen but is yet remembered, is just as real as *Realpolitik*, as the Cold War system, the empty time *continuum* of the “winners” and the weapons they used to impose it: “This consciousness belongs to reality, just like the Warsaw Pact and the NATO, like ‘Persings’⁵⁷⁰ and ‘SS-20’⁵⁷¹, like the presence of foreign armies, like truncheons and gas”⁵⁷².

In contrast to Lelewel’s positive assessment of the Commonwealth, as well as to the later theory of “rebirth” of Warsaw School historians (i.e. the late eighteenth-century regeneration of the *Rzeczypospolita* thwarted by foreign powers), since the 1860s the members of the conservative Cracow School (eg. Michał Bobrzyński and Józef Szujski) developed a much more critical approach to Polish nobility’s traditions and habits⁵⁷³. Therefore, all that Communists had to do once they were in power was to take those negative interpretations further and use them in their own profit.

In this sense, Tadeusz Łepkowski criticized the interpretations displayed in official propaganda about Polish *szlachta* because, in his opinion, they only showed or exaggerated its “dark side” in order to argue that Poland lacked old democratic traditions, that nobles devoted themselves to the oppression of peasants and speculation with national interests and, above all, that the Poles suffered since then from a pronounced tendency to anarchy and self-government that should be thoroughly controlled and appeased by the State. In Łepkowski’s opinion, any past or present liberalization proposals and democratic aspirations were curiously considered “anarchical” in the PRL⁵⁷⁴.

On the other hand, the majority of opposition *inteligenci* who dealt with this topic took an intermediate view for, though they always insistently valued the achievements of that time, they also acknowledged the Commonwealth’s decadence and internal problems⁵⁷⁵. As the magnates increasingly tended to pursue their own benefit over the country’s, corruption became general, the Golden Liberty was distorted and the *Rzeczypospolita* entered a phase of instability and external weakness, making it vulnerable to the influences and attacks of stronger neighboring powers. Hence, while the eighteenth century was the epoch of Enlightened Absolutism in other parts of the continent, Poland plunged into “Enlightened Gangsterism”, in Bratkowski’s words. The

⁵⁶⁹ Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 54, my transl.

⁵⁷⁰ The M-26 Pershing was the first operational heavy tank, later re-designated as medium tank, of the United States Army. It was named after General John J. Pershing, leader of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe in the First World War. It was used in the Second World War and the Korean War.

⁵⁷¹ The RSD-10 *Pioneer*, whose NATO reporting name was SS-20 Saber, was an intermediate-range ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead developed by the Soviet Union between 1976 and 1988, when it was withdrawn from service under the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

⁵⁷² Surdykowski: “Duch Rzeczypospolitej”, 55, my transl.

⁵⁷³ Górny: “From the Splendid Past...”, 107.

⁵⁷⁴ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 11-12.

⁵⁷⁵ However, probably the most skeptical and critical of all was the right-wing oppositionist Jerzy Łojek (1932-1986), who also, unlike the majority of *inteligenci*, did not regard Partition times so negatively. His views were controversial in other matters as well, like his suggestion about what Poles should have done in the face of Nazi and Soviet invasions (yield to Germany and join the anticommunist block), and have little to do with the theses of other intellectuals regarding those topics, as we will see in Chapters 2 and 3. See *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 2.

intellectual and moral vileness of the *szlachta* at those times was a fact, and the author of *Skąd przychodzimy?* censured those historians who, in his opinion, tried to soften or cover up the inconvenient truth in an attempt to mystify the Commonwealth. But matters should not be taken to extremes, oppositionists thought, for the aristocratic system of Poland-Lithuania was not harmful in essence. The building of democracy, for instance in England (considered the cradle of parliamentary system), required many years and experienced numerous setbacks, Łepkowski argued, but no one constantly reproached Englishmen for the slowness of the process or the celebration of corrupt and fake elections. Just like the Nobles' Democracy was considered advanced for its time by *inteligencja*, and hence exceptional, the complications derived from the system were deemed normal and shared with other European nations that sooner or later took steps in similar directions⁵⁷⁶.

If going into more detail, the principle of the Nobles' Commonwealth that was most criticized by its detractors throughout time was the "free veto" (*liberum veto*). This parliamentary device demanded that decisions should be taken unanimously in the *sejm*; therefore, if just one member of the parliament did not agree with what was being proposed, all he had to do was to shout "I do not allow!" ("Nie pozwalam!"). When that happened, the meeting had to end right then and any laws that had been passed during the session were nullified. For many, the *liberum veto* represented the zenith of inefficiency and paralysis in the *Rzeczypospolita* and, by extension, of the anarchical and selfish behavior of the *szlachta*, turning into a source of bribery and blackmail. However, according to Surdykowski, the "free veto" was based on the conviction of the advantages of consensus and was initially conceived as a way to prevent hasty resolutions, as well as to ensure the rights of minorities that could have been continuously damaged by the settlements of majorities⁵⁷⁷.

In the line of this balance between positive and negative, most oppositionists supported more or less explicitly Warsaw School of History's "theory of rebirth" —not from ashes, Bratkowski affirmed, but from a bog—, which is imbued in equal measure with hope and frustration:

The arrangement of forces in Europe and the violence of powerful neighbors prevented the 'nascent Poland' (using Lelewel's words) from becoming Reborn Poland for good. It was a tragedy because the May regime⁵⁷⁸, which was dynamic, self-reforming and looked to the future, could have managed to sustain the priority of national interests —carried out democratically—, the rights of different social groups and an extensive though self-limiting individual freedom.⁵⁷⁹

Therefore, and contrary to the previous Commonwealth's inner degeneration, the chance offered by May 3rd Constitution, rather than wasted, was spoiled by the ambition of others.

⁵⁷⁶ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 12; Bratkowski: "Walka..." , 11-16, 20; *Testament Kisiela...*, 50, conversation date: 12-IX-1990.

⁵⁷⁷ Surdykowski: "Duch Rzeczypospolitej", 50.

⁵⁷⁸ Łepkowski refers to the period of the Great *Sejm* (*Sejm Wielki*), 1788-1792, in which Polish and Lithuanian nobles gathered in Warsaw with a view to restoring the Commonwealth's sovereignty and reforming it politically and economically. Its most important outcome was May 3rd Constitution, 1791, considered the second modern written constitution in the world, after the United States'. The Targowica Confederation, formed by conservative Polish and Lithuanian magnates opposed to these measures, managed to undo the reforms under the Russian empire's protection, leading to the *Rzeczypospolita*'s ultimate dismemberment.

⁵⁷⁹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 12, my transl.; also Bratkowski: "Walka...", 17.

A.2) *The nation, the State and the two faces of “Polishness”: patriotism and nationalism*

The *nation* was one of the fundamental levels or forms of Polish collective identity that *Solidarność* oppositionists appropriated, together with the *working class* and *society* —the latter mostly used by critical left-winged intellectuals. The term was linked, in their eyes, to Romantic ideals, the defense of workers’ rights and a democratic will. On the other hand, since their seizure of power Communist authorities needed to be invested with a certain degree of legitimacy, but, instead of imposing a completely new socialist culture and re-socializing the population in order to attain it (as it happened, for instance, in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s), they chose a less costly formula, so that PRL’s official discourse became socialist in form but remained national in content. This became much clearer after the Stalinist period in public ceremonies and the display of symbols, especially since Edward Gierek was appointed First Secretary of the PZPR (1970-1980)⁵⁸⁰.

“The beautiful and severe disease of Polishness, of national-religious symbols, of the conversations of compatriots in which we extend ‘historical arguments’, of the fatherland’s dilemmas —is our reality”, Łepkowski asserts. Without patriotism, sovereignty or national identity, considered old-fashioned and meaningless in a world tending towards civilizational unity, the Poles would no longer exist as a nation⁵⁸¹. Deprived of the statehood they enjoyed since the Middle Ages, and urged on by a long-lasting sense of danger, they managed to preserve and boost their national feelings over more than a century and learnt that the nation was a top priority which should never be given up in the state-building process. Both Łepkowski and Micewski reflected lengthily about this, among other intellectuals:

The nations that have always had their own State consider their situation as something given, natural, normal. It is not strange, then, that they usually think in state-nation terms, and not in national community or nation-people terms. In Poland, since the end of the 18th century, the nation became for all active and conscious persons the highest good and a supreme value. It was impossible to dream about the rebirth of the State without creating a mature nation that would be aware of its identity.

In Poland’s specific case the national question was, and still is, the key question. Even apparently obsolete previous dilemmas about national history, dating back more than a hundred years, acquire new life in our eyes and live intensely, for as long as Poland is dependent, and if there is no State or it is not independent, the nation must preserve cultural and spiritual independence in order to maintain hope.⁵⁸²

It seems to me that Poland has experienced probably the biggest civilizational and sociological changes in Europe, but that, at the same time, it has kept much better its personality, its cultural identity, traditions, the sense of historical continuity and its attachment to the values grown out of the soil of European culture. If this is so, our specific history of the last two centuries, our partition times and also the sixty years that have gone by after the recovery independence in November 1918, have played a crucial role in the consolidation of our spiritual heritage and system of cultural values. What is unusual about Polish history is that the nation’s existence has been questioned along the last two hundred years, that for a long time the nation had to defend itself, that, longing for survival, it carried out not only uprisings but also the biggest cultural flowering of its history.

⁵⁸⁰ Meller: “Rola myślenia...”, 255-259; Kubik: *The Power of Symbols...*, 2-3 and 31-74; Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja...*

⁵⁸¹ Łepkowski, “Wstęp”, 7-8, my transl.

⁵⁸² Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 22, my transl., also 41; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 48; PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 199-200.

Our most important national works were created in the times when Poland did not exist as a state.⁵⁸³

This mission of cultural development and defense was accomplished, not surprisingly, by *inteligencja*. In the nineteenth century, the spiritual government of the nation was formed by poets, historians, writers and scientists. Since the early twentieth century, Micewski explained, the task was taken up by the new political movements, which encouraged the participation of large portions of society in public life. Such an intertwinement of patriotism, intellectuality and politics took a hold in national consciousness and in family traditions that have been passed on until today, in spite of the transformations occurred during the last decades and Communists' attempts to despise what they considered anachronistic remainders of negative, long gone-by times⁵⁸⁴. Regarding these widespread conceptions, could there be, in consequence, a specific Polish national character?

Tadeusz Łepkowski was probably the most determined to define how Poles behaved in late Modern history. According to him, Polish people had a high self-esteem and described themselves as brave, firm and prone to resistance. They were capable of working well... though only when they wanted to; they also were inventive and good at manual activities. However, their arrogance and boastfulness concealed an acute inferiority complex. They lacked good organization and systematization, which prevented them from profiting from circumstances and achieving complete successes. They could be realist individually or in small groups, but not in a national scale. Many, especially *inteligenci* and townspeople, experienced fits of impotence caused by repeated failures and soon fell into defeatism. As it happened with Russians, sometimes they looked for consolation in alcohol. Perhaps mirroring the extreme territorial fluctuations of the Polish State, which along its history varied from being an important power to not existing at all, the Poles tended to be radical in their emotions and self-perception: either they were the best or they were the worst, either they achieved a great success, or they despaired and gave up immediately. Others yielded to risk and fate, a habit which frequently had very high political costs for the country⁵⁸⁵.

On the other hand, Adam Michnik, who also devoted some pages to this topic, considered that *Solidarność* and the Polish nation were, if not completely equal, very deeply connected, for the latter had given birth to the former. Hence, opposition's virtues and flaws were akin to society's; a society

... that has lived for forty years without democratic institutions, beyond the sphere of political culture; (...) systematically deceived, stunned and humiliated; (...) unsubmitive and sensible at the same time; (...) where honor, freedom and solidarity are the highest values, and compromise is associated too frequently with capitulation, with desertion.⁵⁸⁶

Jumping ahead in time, how would such a society face the challenge of the first half-free elections and be persuaded by oppositionists that *they*, and not Communists, (still) represented the Polish nation? A selection of graphic sources might shed some light on the matter.

Designed for the campaigns of the parliamentary elections (June 4th 1989) and the local elections (May 1990), the following five placards⁵⁸⁷ transmitted a clear message:

⁵⁸³ Micewski: "Naród i państwo", 1, my transl., also Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 85.

⁵⁸⁴ Micewski: "Naród i państwo", 1; Łepkowski, "Wstęp", 8.

⁵⁸⁵ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 6, 40-41.

⁵⁸⁶ Michnik: "Polska Wojna", 5.

⁵⁸⁷ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

to vote for *Solidarność* meant to vote for Poland. Each poster depicts a famous character of Polish history or, in the case of the mermaid, of its legends:



Figure 1

The mermaid (Figure 1) is present in Warsaw's coat of arms and has become a symbol of the town. She classically carries a sword and a shield but, in this case, the sword has been replaced by *Solidarność*'s logo, linking the movement to the defense of Polishness. The two most famous and typical representations of this character in the city's streets are located right in the center of the old town square (Rynek Starego Miasta) and in the nearby neighborhood of Powiśle, beside river Vistula.



Figure 2

Fryderyk (or Frédéric) Chopin (1810-1849) certainly needs no further introduction (Figure 2). The author of the picture, the poster designer Anna Huskowska (1922-1989) chose to draw, in particular, a popular statue of the composer which was inaugurated, after years of delay, in 1926 in Warsaw's Łazienki Park. Since *wygrać* can mean both "to win" and "to play a musical instrument", it is very appropriate for the worldwide-known musician to resort to a word game and affirm that "I will win [perform] the elections" (*Wygram wybory*).



Figure 3

Prince Józef Poniatowski (1763-1813) was an outstanding military leader and nephew of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August (Figure 3). He supported May 3rd Constitution and participated in Kościuszko's uprising (1794). In 1807 he was appointed Minister of War and Head of the Army (later Commander in Chief) of the Duchy of Warsaw, the Polish satellite state created by Napoleon after the Treaty of Tilsit. As such, and remaining loyal to the Emperor until the end, he took part in the Napoleonic campaigns of Russia and Prussia, and incorporated many of the recovered lands under Austrian control into the new Polish Duchy (eg. Cracow). During the Battle of Leipzig he drowned, covered in wounds, in the Weisse Elster river.

The equestrian statue of Józef Poniatowski that Huskowska drew in the poster is located in Krakowskie Przedmieście street, in front of Warsaw's Presidential Palace, which was until very recently the official seat of the President of the Republic of Poland. The figure of the picture speaks precisely about his tragic death: "Instead of drowning in the Elster, let's vote for *Solidarność*" (*Zamiast topić się w Elsterze, głosujemy na Solidarność*). This suggestion summarizes exceptionally well the crucial transformation that took place in opposition's methods and discourse along the second half of the twentieth century. Now, in order to change things in Poland, armed struggles, dubious alliances or military campaigns in pursuit of independence, plus the typical romantic-heroic individual sacrifice, are simply out of the question, and must be substituted for a collective, conscious political act. This suits Jan Ifversen's idea about the *mise-en-scene* of modern political myths in more conventional or everyday contexts focused on the future. However, for Ewa Domańska, the absence of violence during Poland's transformation meant that the death and rebirth cycle embedded in Polish consciousness, which entailed sacrifice and spilling of blood, was not totally fulfilled this time. Thus, the mythical process remained strangely incomplete⁵⁸⁸. If her observation is fitting, did Polish national myths, including *inteligencja*'s, manage to survive the *transformacja* period? —I will go back to this question at the end of the work (Conclusions).

⁵⁸⁸ Ifversen: "Myth in the Writing...", 456; Domańska: "(Re)creative Myths...", 256-257.



Figure 4

The fourth poster (Figure 4) shows another international figure: the mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (Mikołaj Kopernik in Polish) (1473-1543). Warsaw's monument to Copernicus was inaugurated in 1830 between Nowy Świat and Krakowskie Przedmieście streets, right in front of Staszic's Palace —the actual headquarters of the Polish Academy of Sciences. "To change the world beyond recognition" (*Ruszyć z posad bryłę świata*), to transform something that seemed unchangeable, like Communist regimes, was indeed a task for opposition (*Tak, to coś dla nas*), and just as revolutionary as Copernicus' discoveries.



Figure 5

The starring figure of the fifth and last placard is Jan Kiliński (1760-1819), a prominent burgher of Warsaw who led the city's Uprising against Russian occupation forces in 1794 (Figure 5). Later that same year he participated in Kościuszko's national Uprising with his militias. He was arrested twice by partitioning powers and imprisoned in Russia. After his release, he returned to Warsaw, where he died. He is buried in a crypt at the Powązki Cemetery's Church. His statue, built in the mid-1930s, is located, as the rest, in Warsaw's old town, first in Krasiński square, and since 1959 in Podwale street.

Kiliński, who was shoemaker by trade, refers in the poster to a popular children's poem written by Jan Brzechwa (1898-1966), who probably inspired himself in Charles

Perrault's fairytale "Le petit Poucet"⁵⁸⁹: "It is time to use, as if they were new, these seven-league Polish boots" (*Czas by uszyć,/ całkiem jak nowe,/ te polskie buty siedmiomiliowe*). After a period of stagnation, what was needed was a "great (democratic) leap forward", that is, to get moving and become involved in the transformation of the country.

According to these designs, some of the most renowned figures of the country, who represented for many some of the best features of Polish identity (ancient identity roots, political, cultural and scientific advances, struggle for national freedom), were on opposition's side. Despite cleavages soon spread within *Solidarność* movement after these elections, starting with the Citizens' Committees in charge of organizing them (Komitety Obywatelskie "Solidarności"), during the campaigns the image of national unity was still maintained.

But the posters do not only take for granted or reassert the Polishness of these characters—even if their nationality might be discussed given previous state borders, their birthplace, the multinational context in which they were raised up, the way people understood their identity back then or their later naturalization, just to mention a few examples. These placards are, in addition, specific depictions of very special *lieux de mémoire* characteristic of Warsaw's landscape. Such city landmarks commemorating the past soon became part of national remembrance too, for they conceal a history of repression and resistance all by themselves.

For instance, Józef Poniatowski's statue, modelled after the Emperor Marcus Aurelius' in Rome, was sponsored by Polish nobility and executed by Bertel Thorvaldsen between 1826 and 1832. It was meant to be placed in its actual location, but after the November Uprising the Tsar changed his mind and opposed to it. In the meantime, Ivan Paskevich, commander of the Russian troops in Congress Poland, definitely crushed the Uprising in 1831 and was awarded the post of Namestnik⁵⁹⁰ of the Kingdom of Poland for it. The period under his rule was especially repressive and Russification very intense, being frequently defined in Poland as the "Paskevich Night". This has much to do with the fate of Poniatowski's monument because, after different avatars, the statue ended up in Paskevich's manor of Homel (actual Eastern Belarus), where it stood from 1842 to 1922. What's more: after the 1830-1831 defeat the actual Presidential Palace turned into the Namestnik Palace, so that in 1870, shortly after Paskevich's death, a statue in his honor was inaugurated right in front of it, that is, where Poniatowski's effigy was meant to stand. The place was personally chosen by Tsar Alexander II, who was present in the unveiling. After the Polish-Soviet War (1920), the statue of the Polish commander returned to Warsaw, where it changed several times of location. However, at the end of 1944 it was blown up deliberately by the Nazis. Following the model of the Danish sculptor kept in his Museum in Copenhagen, the statue was recast and given to the PRL as a present from the kingdom of Denmark in the early 1950s, and since 1965 it stands once again before the Palace.

The rest of the stories have to do with the ordeals undergone during the Second World War. Chopin's effigy, for example, was the first monument that the German occupiers destroyed, in May 1940. A replica was cast from the original mold and replaced in 1958. With Copernicus the struggle was somehow different due to his origins: since the beginning of the occupation, the Latin and Polish inscriptions at the

⁵⁸⁹ Translated as "Little Thumbling" or "Hop-o'-My-Thumb" in English, "Pulgarcito" in Spanish and "Paluszek" in Polish.

⁵⁹⁰ A kind of viceroy.

base of the monument⁵⁹¹ were covered by a plaque saying “Dem Grossen Deutschen Astronomen”, “To the Great German Astronomer”. In February 1942, a member of a Polish underground resistance group removed the plaque and hid it. In turn, the Nazis took revenge by dismantling Jan Kiliński’s statue and concealing its pieces in the warehouses of the National Museum. However, the monument’s hiding place was soon discovered, for somebody painted on the Museum’s wall the following message: “People of Warsaw, I am here —Jan Kiliński”. Another “autographed” comment appeared then beside Copernicus statue: “In retaliation for the disappearance of Kiliński’s monument I order Winter to last six more weeks”. Curiously, that year Winter was longer than usual. During Warsaw Uprising, the statue of Copernicus disappeared. It was found after the War in the countryside and was returned to the capital. Its restoration ended in 1949.

All these anecdotes prove that, beyond their initial purpose, such effigies became symbols of Polish national resistance and of the defense against cultural annihilation in the battlefield of collective memory. In PRL times, that struggle was taken up by oppositionists and the elections of 1989-1990 represented its last “round”. Hence, multiple echoes of the past and layers of meaning overlap and enrich such apparently very simply conceived posters when a Polish citizen takes a look at them.

One of the permanent worries of some *inteligenci* was that, in line with the “extremeness” that Tadeusz Łepkowski perceived in his compatriots’ collective behavior, many Poles had frequently mistaken patriotism for nationalism and xenophobia.

Stefan Kisielewski, in his usual no-nonsense and slightly pungent style, considered that national pride denaturalized and contained maniacal elements if it was based on such arguments as “because it is *my* country” or “because my fatherland is *right*”, or tried to justify itself through some kind of subjective mysticism. The Poles, he argued, should be proud *of something*, not just for the sake of having suffered in the past or mere survival. To be resentful or embittered and remember constantly other countries’ attitude towards Poland has never solved anything. All nations have exceptional features, and all, including Poland, would like to forget shameful episodes of the past. However, Poles regard their history as something sacred and deeply dislike criticism for it. That is why the Historical School of Cracow has never been very popular, he believed⁵⁹².

Poland’s “dark side” is condemnable, and it is *inteligencja*’s duty to remind about such events, give them their corresponding place in history books and not contribute to fuel stereotypes and falseness through indiscriminate “fondness”. In his influential work *Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy* [*Two fatherlands, two patriotisms*], Jan Józef Lipski displayed a detailed list of reasons why his fellow countrymen should not get carried away with “Polishness”:

‘To love all that is Polish’ — that is a usual formula of national, ‘patriotic’ nonsense. Because the National Radical Camp⁵⁹³ was ‘Polish’, as well as the pogroms of Lwów, Przytyk and Kielce⁵⁹⁴,

⁵⁹¹ “To Nicolaus Copernicus from his Grateful Fatherland” and “To Nicolaus Copernicus from his Compatriots”, respectively.

⁵⁹² KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Mój patriotyzm maniakalny” and “Starzy i młodzi”, in KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: *Lata poślacane, lata szare. Wybór felietonów z lat 1945-1987*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Znak, 1989, 555-557 and 559, respectively.

⁵⁹³ The Obóz Narodowo Radykalny (ONR) was a nationalist, extreme right, pro-violence, anti-semitic and anti-communist political party created in 1934 by young radicals who had left the ranks of National Democracy. Shortly after its formation it was delegalized and it split into two factions: ONR-Falanga, led by Bolesław Piasecki and ONR-ABC, led by Henryk Rossman.

and the 'bench Ghetto'⁵⁹⁵, and the pacification of the Ukrainian countryside, and Brześć⁵⁹⁶, and Bereza⁵⁹⁷, and the camp of Jabłonna of 1920⁵⁹⁸, just to mention a few examples taking place in scarcely twenty years of our history. Patriotism does not only mean to love and respect tradition, but also to inexorably select the elements of this tradition, which is an intellectual duty in this sphere. The guilt for providing a false assessment of the past, for fueling national myths which are morally false, for helping national megalomania to hush up the dark stains of our own history, is probably less from a moral point of view than for causing direct harm to our fellow men, but is nevertheless the premise of today's evil and the road to future evil.

We do not like to remember about the conquest of the Jatvingians⁵⁹⁹ by fire and sword —that would ruin the image we have of the Polish nation, that allegedly has never killed anybody. We do not like to include in our history handbooks information about the murder of the garrison of the town of Velikiye Luki after capitulation⁶⁰⁰ —because that does not suit our knightly-humanitarian historical stereotype. We forget about the methods employed to fight against Ukrainian revolts and uprisings, about the raids of our national hero Stefan Czarniecki, who killed even the babies, village after village⁶⁰¹; about the crazy chaos of mutual revenges and counter-revenges that are a mournful part of Polish-Ukrainian history since a couple of centuries ago. We are proud of Polish tolerance, but we only reluctantly remember when it ended and how. We are proud of the Polish participation in Napoleon's Spanish campaign, as if Somosierra, the annihilation of soldiers who defended the independence of their country, was a glorious page of our history, and we try with all our might to forget about the shame of Saragossa, or to distort it.⁶⁰²

Rather than a specific nation, Lipski supported that the main victims along history had been values like freedom, human dignity, independence and tolerance. When the Poles defended those imponderables, nation and principles overlapped, either in defeat

⁵⁹⁴ Aimed against the Jews, the Lwów pogrom took place on November 21st-23rd, 1918, within the framework of the Polish-Ukrainian War (November 1918-July 1919); the Przytyk pogrom, the most tragical of the Second Republic period, on March 9th, 1936; and the Kielce one, initiated by Soviet-backed Communist forces, took place on July 4th, 1946.

⁵⁹⁵ The bench Ghetto (*getto ławkowe*) marked the peak of Polish anti-Semitism in the interwar period. It was a form of official segregation in the seating of higher education students that was initiated in 1935 at the Polytechnic of Lwów. By 1937, it was already applied in most universities. Jewish students were forced to sit on a left-hand side section of benches in the lecture halls, reserved exclusively for them, under threat of expulsion. When doing so, they were usually verbally and physically attacked by youths belonging to extreme right formations, such as ONR.

⁵⁹⁶ In 1930, when Brześć (former Brest-Litovsk, actually in Belarus) belonged to Poland, many moderate left-winged oppositionists (eg. Wincenty Witos) were enjailed in its citadel after a famous trial.

⁵⁹⁷ The Bereza Kartuska detention camp (now in Belarus) was created in 1934 to enjaile people who were considered a "threat for the security, peace and social order" without formal charges or trial for three months, with the possibility of prolonging detention indefinitely. At the beginning, most detainees were political opponents of the *Sanacja* regime (Communists, members of extreme-right parties, Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalists).

⁵⁹⁸ The prison at Jabłonna, near Warsaw, was the first concentration camp for Jews established in Poland. An article in Polish about it can be read in "Racjonalista", the webpage of the Rational-Skeptical Association Voltaire. Mariusz Agnoszewicz: "Polski obóz koncentracyjny w Jabłonie", <http://www.racjonalista.pl/kk.php/s,8625> (accessed on August 25th, 2014).

⁵⁹⁹ Also called Yotvingians or Sudovians, the Jatvingians were a Baltic people with close ties to the Lithuanians and Prussians, who lived in a territory now shared between Poland, Lithuania and Belarus (Yotvingia). In response to the raids of the Yotvingians in his territory, in 1234 the Duke of Cracow, Bolesław V the Chaste, organized an expedition against them. In the battle of Brańsk, the Jatvingians were defeated and their leader, Kumata, was killed. In the 1280s Yotvingia was partly conquered by the Teutonic Knights, and in 1422 was divided between them, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

⁶⁰⁰ The siege of Velikiye Luki (actual Russia) took place on September 1st-5th, 1580 within the Livonian campaign of King Stephen Báthory. Polish-Lithuanian forces and Hungarian mercenaries set fire to the fortress and also to the nearby town, in order to avoid townspeople helping the sieged army. The pillage continued after the garrison's surrender.

⁶⁰¹ Stefan Czarniecki (1599-1665) was a nobleman and general of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He made important contributions in the battles of the Russo-Polish War and the Polish-Swedish War.

⁶⁰² Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 38, my transl.

(most frequently, one must admit) or in victory. However, when they became or tried to become “winners” by siding with intolerance, arrogance, greed and aggressiveness, the nation lost its way and real patriotism was at its lowest ebb.

The “cure” for that illness could be to remind about the multicultural and multinational substratum of Polish lands. “Polishness”, or what is considered today as the highest expression of Polish identity, including the language, is imbued with the contributions of other nationalities and cultures living in the territory, especially Germans and Jews. The Middle Ages and early Modern period were generally times of exchange and peaceful coexistence and, out of them, emerged today’s Poland⁶⁰³.

Polish churches, civil buildings and museums, the home of national heritage, contain many works made by artists and craftsmen of German origin. Such was the case of the sculptor Wit Stwos⁶⁰⁴ (ca. 1450-1533), the author of the magnificent polychrome wooden altar at St. Mary’s Church in Cracow and of the tomb of king Kazimierz IV in Wawel Cathedral. But one may even go further ahead in time: Lorenz Christoph Milzer von Kolof, better known in Poland as Mitzler de Kolof (1711-1778), physician, musician, printer and editor, became the precursor of Polish Enlightenment and was in charge of publishing the famous popularizing newspaper *Monitor* (1765-1785) at the initiative of king Stanisław August Poniatowski. And so on...⁶⁰⁵.

The case of Jewish population was even more worrisome for Lipski: if people who were rejected and attacked had been living in Poland for generations, spoke Polish, had similar traditions, contributed to Poland’s improvement and fight for independence, or even shared beliefs, could the hatred against them be labelled as *xenophobia*? Or as nationalism? Not even religious reasons could be argued, especially after the Second Vatican Council. Thus, in Lipski’s view, that kind of blind fear and mistrust could only be described as pure racism. Contrary to the “patriotism” alleged by its supporters, anti-Semitism meant to turn against other Poles. With the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943) in mind, the author of *Dwie ojczyzny...* pointed out that Polish Jews were a specific part of the Jewish community and could not be murdered without also killing something deep inside Polish nation⁶⁰⁶.

Faced with Communist power’s use of national discourses as a way of legitimization, oppositionists insisted on the idea that *they* represented the “right” patriotism, whereas PRL government’s concealed two extreme dangers: submission to the USSR and nationalism. Those were the two patriotisms Lipski wrote about in his homonymous essay: the first served national megalomania and was currently used by authorities as an instrument to divide Poles and stir up conflicts, as well as to divert attention from Poland’s real dependence on the Soviet Union and to avoid approaches to Western Europe. Communists’ efforts to suppress what was left of Poland’s multinational reality since the end of the War (deportation of Germans, limitation of the rights of Lithuanians and Kashubians⁶⁰⁷, pogroms...) were followed by the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968. The second patriotism, much more critical and balanced in its view of the past and its consequences, would be inspired in Stefan Żeromski’s works, where “Saragossa is both a tragedy and a national disgrace; the Austrian Empire’s legislation allowed certain social progress; the Polish peasant of January Uprising’s times [1863] is

⁶⁰³ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 6-8, 10; Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, 42-49 and 57-67.

⁶⁰⁴ Vit Stoss in German.

⁶⁰⁵ Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, 47; Bratkowski: “Jak być...”, 47-49.

⁶⁰⁶ Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, 57-58; LIPSKI, Jan Józef: “O sensie powstania w warszawskim getcie” , in Lipski: *Powiedzieć sobie wszystko...*, 85.

⁶⁰⁷ West Slavic ethnic group of Pomerelia, in north-central Poland. Their language is considered either a dialect of Polish or a separate language.

depicted in a naturalistic fashion, far from ‘patriotic’ vignettes; the power apparatus of independent Poland is harshly denounced in *Przedwiośnie*, and serves as a warning”⁶⁰⁸.

Opposition *inteligenci* were sure about it: that was the patriotism Poland should embrace. But what about the rest of the Poles? Was it so clear for them, for the majority that stood between critical, humanist intellectuals and the (governmental or not) promoters of hatred? Referring to the latter during the anti-Semitic repression of 1968, Lipski asserted that:

We do not have a shared fatherland and we do not want to have anything in common with them. But between the patriotism of Słonimski⁶⁰⁹, the Ossowskis⁶¹⁰ or Jasienica⁶¹¹ (I especially choose creators who were very different among them, and at the same time shared humanism and patriotism; they’re the most recent patrons or even the co-authors of today’s democratic opposition movement) and the ‘patriotism’ of Filipiński, Gontarz or Kąkol⁶¹² there is an enormous social space full of people for whom a battle still wages: which fatherland will they choose? Under no circumstances should we give up on all those who are intoxicated with xenophobia and national megalomania, but whose feelings and thoughts are not yet ultimately and hopelessly deformed by hatred and arrogance. The fight for the shape of Polish patriotism will be decisive for the moral, cultural and political fate of our nation.⁶¹³

That struggle should be based on (re-)education or, more specifically, on changing the way Poles remember their past. “History”, Lipski said, “must be the door to the future”; so, for instance, in the case of Polish-German relations,

What do we want to choose as symbols for the future: Grunwald⁶¹⁴ —or Legnica⁶¹⁵, where Poles and Germans stood (...) in Batu Khan’s way? Of course, Grunwald will always remain in national

⁶⁰⁸ Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, 39, my transl.; also Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Antoni Słonimski (1895-1976) was a Polish poet, playwright, publicist, theater critic and activist. He advocated a multi-cultural and tolerant model of Poland, based on freedom and equality. He was one of the founders of the Club of the Crooked Circle. When he was banned from exercising any public post by Władysław Gomułka, he devoted to different opposition initiatives. He signed many letters of protest (eg. the Letter of the 34, initiated together with Lipski in 1964 against the cultural policies of the Party) and was included in PRL’s list of censored authors.

⁶¹⁰ Meaning the sociologist Stanisław Ossowski (see Chapter 1) and his wife, Maria Ossowska (1896-1974). The latter was a moral theoretician and sociologist, professor at Warsaw University.

⁶¹¹ Paweł Jasienica was the pen name of Leon Lech Beynar (1909-1970), a Polish historian and journalist. During World War II he fought in the Polish army and later in the Home Army, as well as with the anti-Soviet resistance. His books on Polish medieval and early modern history, published in the 1960s and 1970s (*Piast Poland*, *Jagiellon Poland* and *the Commonwealth*), were very well received by readers and greatly contributed to the formation of the popular (and opposition) interpretation of Polish history, defined by Maciej Górny as “non-Marxist, traditional and progressive-patriotic —thus, optimistic”. Due to his dissident activities he was relentlessly persecuted by PRL authorities and, during a brief period before his death, his books were banned in the country. His funeral was attended by many dissidents and oppositionists, becoming a political demonstration against Communist regime. See Górny: “From the Splendid Past...”, 111. Jasienica’s *Jagiellonian Poland*, *Piast Poland* and the three volumes of *The Commonwealth of Both Nations* were firstly published in English by the American Institute of Polish Culture in 1978, 1985 and 1992, respectively.

⁶¹² The actor and film director Ryszard Filipiński and the publicists Ryszard Gontarz and Kazimierz Kąkol were PZPR members and politicians. They supported PRL regime in official media and participated in the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968, besides attacking oppositionists in several ways.

⁶¹³ Lipski: “Dwie ojczyzny...”, 41, my transl.

⁶¹⁴ The Battle of Grunwald (15 July 1410), one of the largest in medieval Europe, took place during the War of the allied Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania against the Teutonic Knights (1409-1411). Also known as the First Battle of Tannenberg or Battle of Žalgiris, it is considered one of the most important armed victories in the history of Poland (as well as of Lithuania and Belarus) and a favorite topic in romantic times, becoming a source of national pride and a symbol of struggle against invaders.

memory—but does it have to be just Grunwald? What must predominate in our consciousness, the destruction of Polish culture by the Nazis during the Second World War—or its enrichment by Wit Stwoszcz and hundreds of less-known, excellent artists? Do we want to retain just Oświęcim's [Auschwitz's] tormentors in our memories, or also those Germans, even if they were just a handful, who fought against evil not only as prisoners but also as personnel of the camp? (...) Can Germans only be Gestapo agents and members of the SS in our consciousness? Weren't the heroes of the *Weisse Rose* in Munich Germans too, taking up the hardest of struggles right in the midst of darkness, a struggle against 'their people' in wartime?⁶¹⁶

As self-appointed representatives of the nation and alchemists of discourses, intellectuals are the right persons to undertake this re-configuration of Polish historical narratives, and hence of Polish consciousness. It was simply conceived as part of their responsibilities towards society.

One of the most noteworthy theses within *inteligencja's* counter-hegemonic discourses was the historical antagonism between the Polish nation and the State apparatus. Even though in the Communist period, as in any other, the interaction, collaboration and coexistence between private and public was frequent in many fields of life, a very clear State-society division began to take shape in people's minds. The powerful narrative about Polish society's imperviousness to Communism and its constant resistance, with the Church's aid, to a regime imposed by a foreign power survived the disappearance of the Eastern bloc and is still present in more recent, democratic stages⁶¹⁷.

One may add, of course, some nuances to this. For instance, in his determination to overcome dualisms in Polish history writing, and similarly to his "romantivist" blend proposal (Chapter 1), Tadeusz Łepkowski suggested the existence of a "third nation" in his analyses of the PRL decades up until the early 1980s. Between people-nation and state-nation, the "third nation" would be the common ground or field of interaction of the other two spheres, a kind of tacit "federation" containing the vast majority of Polish population. During more stable periods in the country, the number of people standing in that intermediate field would increase, whereas in unstable times a polarization of positions would take place and it would considerably decrease. There would never be, however, a complete symbiosis: either a person belonged simultaneously to the nation-people and to the "third nation", or to the state-nation and the "third nation", no other combinations were possible. In addition, Łepkowski supported the idea that, after the creation of *Solidarność*, the secular division between the State and the people became very clearly defined and prolonged itself at least until the very end of the 1980s. Thus, going back to our first point, one must acknowledge that, despite attempts to minimize it, the dualist tendency was deeply enrooted in *inteligencja's* thought and Polish consciousness, and became a mighty weapon to stimulate change⁶¹⁸.

Intellectuals supported that Polish people's mistrust of the State came from the times when, instead of marching in unison, the latter turned against the nation's interests. In a way, to split up State and society was "unnatural" because, at least in theory, the State is simply a form of social organization in charge of protecting a

⁶¹⁵ In the Battle of Legnica, also known as the Battle of Liegnitz or Battle of Wahlstatt (9 April 1241), a combined force of Poles, Czechs and Germans commanded by the duke Henry II the Pious of Silesia (province of the Kingdom of Poland) attempted to halt the invasion of Europe by the Mongol empire. Only two days after the clash, the Mongol troops attained a much larger victory over the Hungarians in the Battle of Mohi.

⁶¹⁶ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 47-48, my transl.

⁶¹⁷ Kubik: *The Power of Symbols...*, 4-5; Christian and Droit: "Écrire l'histoire...", 126.

⁶¹⁸ ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: "Dwa narody czy podwójny naród (więź narodowa w Polsce współczesnej)", in Łepkowski: *Uparte trwanie...*: 45-55.

nation's freedom, culture and development, they argued. However, due to the lack of statehood or to the arbitrary measures taken by following state apparatuses, the responsibility of safeguarding Polish identity and the feeling of historical continuity in times of hardship had fallen almost exclusively on the nation's shoulders. Hence, since Partition times, the people became the leading voice in the issue of national and historical consciousness⁶¹⁹.

According to Łepkowski, the Poles were only in favor of legitimate governments that respected individual rights and counted with society's support. Despotism and tyranny were foreign to Polish traditions, and sovereignty had to emanate from the nation, not from the State. This definition, however, did not rule out dictatorial systems:

Our strength and, at the same time, our weak spot (certainly threatening in Poland's geopolitical situation) was that we really didn't and do not like despotism and we do not have absolutist state traditions of our own. However, it is not true that Poles oppose to strong governments and reject any kind of dictatorship. Within our tradition we find acceptance of a strong power, though at the nation's service, chosen and supported by it. We had national dictators (but not despots and tyrants) at the nation's request during the hardest times: Kościuszko, Chłopicki⁶²⁰, Krukowiecki⁶²¹, Mierosławski⁶²², Traugutt, Piłsudski... We rejected them when they wanted to use the nation's support to rule against its will, when they deceived society or when they remained in office longer than what was needed in extraordinary circumstances. Nevertheless, we do not acknowledge usurpers or dictators imposed without society's mandate, no matter how much they embellish themselves with ultra-national feathers and brandish patriotic clichés. Our device is simple: a strong power emanated from society, law-abiding and respecting individual rights —yes, any other —no.⁶²³

Following that argument, Łepkowski believed that 1980 protests were, among other things, a reaction against Communist attempts to "statalize" society.

The totalitarian bureaucratic socialist model had given birth to new state structures and classes that aimed to substitute the old ones, or at least push them into the background. According to oppositionists, on the top of this novel order stood a reduced and very endogamous oligarchy that directed the political game. United by necessity in order to defend their privileges (eg. wealthy homes, Western cars, Western currencies, unofficial incomes of dubious origin), its members were popularly known as "the owners of People's Poland". On the other hand, the intermediate and more numerous levels in the PRL system were formed by docile people willing to serve the elite. This socialist "middle class" included a great part of the Party, governmental and repressive apparatuses, army cadres and a considerable amount of journalists and scientific

⁶¹⁹ Smolar: "Prosta i koło", 96; BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Program i organizacja", in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 71; Micewski: "Naród i państwo", 1-2.

⁶²⁰ Józef Chłopicki (1771-1854), a Polish general and participant of Kościuszko's Uprising, with an outstanding participation in the Napoleonic campaigns (eg. in Spain), was the head of the November Uprising dictatorship at the general request of his compatriots from the beginning of December 1830 until mid-January 1831. After resigning to the post due to the hopelessness of the insurrection, he still fought in some battles and was seriously wounded.

⁶²¹ Jan Krukowiecki (1772-1850), participant in the Napoleonic wars, was the head of the November Uprising's Polish National Government between August and September 1831, when he surrendered Warsaw to the Russian troops and was sent to Siberia. After his return to Polish lands he was tried for treason, but was finally acquitted.

⁶²² Ludwik Mierosławski (1814-1878) was a Polish general, historian, writer and political activist. After participating in the November Uprising he emigrated to France and in 1846 was appointed commander of the Greater Poland Uprising, though he was soon arrested by the Prussians. He was condemned to death penalty for his underground conspiratorial activities, but was amnestied in 1848. He was the first of the four dictators of the January Uprising in 1863.

⁶²³ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 11, my transl.

bureaucrats. They would be recruited from different social classes, especially from peasantry, following a “negative selection”, i.e. choosing people prone to corruption and with a liking for repression, who were cynical, against changes, anti-*inteligencja*, with a low educational and cultural level, etc. Their appointment did not undergo any democratic controls and, given such attributes, their policies were usually characterized by inefficiency and avoidable mistakes.

These elitist state groups would have even coined a kind of jargon of their own, both out of a wish to distinguish themselves from the “rest” of their compatriots and to exert an influence on them (intellectuals compared it to Orwell’s Newspeak⁶²⁴) as well as out of sheer ignorance and to avoid calling a spade a spade. Stefan Kisielewski made a mock of this phenomenon by comparing it with Latin in the Middle Ages, a language only used by the powerful, full of complex, abstract terms that had nothing to do with the real problems of “plebeians”, whose vernacular language was Polish. For what did “reeducationally optimal” (*reedukatywno optymalny*) or “revaluablerecreative” (*rewaloryzacyjno rekreacyjny*) really mean to the latter?, he wondered, caricaturizing Communist authorities’ taste for half-invented, long and senseless expressions⁶²⁵.

To establish a link between feudal times and the present was no coincidence either. It was a way, as we will see further on, to use the Marxist interpretation of historical progress (in which feudalism was considered the lowest and most unfair socio-economic system) against those who promoted it, in order to make evident their hypocrisy. Just like in the medieval period,

authorities scorned society and feared it at the same time. Most frequently rulers treated society as a flock of simpletons⁶²⁶. It was reciprocal, though. When the government said ‘we’ it pretended to speak in the name of everybody, but in reality it only spoke in its own name. The masses spoke about themselves as ‘us’, and on the top, moving further and further away, were ‘them’.⁶²⁷

But to speak different tongues implied something more than a lack of communication and of common aspirations (like independence) between the State and society. If we assume that language is a basic part of national identity, and Communists’ “Newspeak” was seen as a rather ugly deformation of Polish, the subsequent deduction was that PRL apparatus would be, at best, only half-Polish... Therefore, the “linguistic

⁶²⁴ *Nowomowa* is the Polish translation of “Newspeak”, the language invented by the dictatorial, proletarian authorities, full of contradictions and euphemisms, in George Orwell’s novel *1984*. The use of this term was very widespread among Polish oppositionists, in reference to the Communists’ particular way of speaking.

⁶²⁵ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 55-56; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Historia będzie opowiedziana”, in Kisielewski: *Lata połączane...*, 525-527. Contrary to other authors, Stefan Kisielewski considered that this elitist behavior of Communist authorities was a “national” bad habit, stemming from the degeneration of Polish nobility in past centuries. KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Niedziela po szwedku”, in Kisielewski: *Lata połączane...*, 536-541.

Note: I haven’t been able to find Kisiel’s “Historia będzie opowiedziana” in any number of *Tygodnik Powszechny* of 1976, though it allegedly comes from that weekly and the year. I believed it was important to check the exact date in the magazine due to June 1976 workers’ protests and strikes against the worsening of general economic conditions. If his *felieton* was published during or after those events, it might be echoing that specific moment and the separation of “communist elite” and Polish society he deals with. There is just one number of *Tygodnik Powszechny* I have not been able to check: that published on 17-X-1976. There is a chance it might be there.

⁶²⁶ As in Spanish, the Polish expression “stado baranów” means “rebaño de borregos”. “Borrego” means literally “yearling lamb”, evoking innocence, meekness and simplicity, hence the use of “flock” in my translation.

⁶²⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 56, my transl.

estrangement” was a very useful and convincing argument to support opposition’s theory about the foreignness of the State-Party⁶²⁸.

But which elements in particular were “foreign” (that is, *not* “Polish”) within official institutions, and which weren’t? Or better still: which aspects of the PRL system were simply *not European*? In *inteligencja*’s discourses it all boiled down to three possible options, though it is not always easy to tell them apart: Communist ideology, Russia’s typical “vices” and forms of government and, thirdly, a combination of both, i.e. Soviet (or Bolshevik) theory and practice, understood as the Russian version of Communism.

In this chapter we will go through the first and the third elements, leaving the second for the part devoted to Poland’s relations with Russia and the Western countries (Chapter 3).

A.3) *Communism and Soviet ideology*

It is logical to think that the main source of discomfort for oppositionists in PRL times should be Communism itself. And so it was in the great majority of cases, though with slight differences.

For example, in the eyes of many left-wing intellectuals the Polish Communist system was not necessarily akin to Communist ideology. The historian Jerzy Holzer, for instance, considered that his country’s government was rather a criminal distortion of Communism as such (*jego zbrodniczy wypaczenie*)⁶²⁹, which reminds us immediately of Bronisław Geremek’s comment about an evil and corrupted order hiding behind the mask of socialist principles⁶³⁰. Because of its connection to the core issue of truth and falseness in opposition discourses, such distinction is the most widespread and important nuance on this topic.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the Polish Communist State was far from being a monolithic or unmovable phenomenon: within the PZPR and the government there was in practice a broad range of positions and points of view, including many that verged on dissidence some way or another⁶³¹. And, as we have already pointed out, some of the most renowned oppositionists were actually in the ranks of the Party until very late. However, both lifelong oppositionists and dissidents were determined to establish a Manichaean separation between Polish society and anything that had to do with Communist State authorities (*us* vs. *them*)⁶³² in order to

⁶²⁸ Some opposition works dealing with the use of language in PRL’s official spheres: BARAŃCZAK, Stanisław: *Czytelnik ubezwłasnowolniony: perswazja w masowej kulturze literackiej PRL*, Paris, Libella, 1983; KARPÍŃSKI, Jakub: *Mowa do ludu. Szkice o języku polityki*, Lublin, Wydawnictwo Vademecum, 1985 (1984); SZLAJFER, Henryk [pseud. Jan Kowalski, Andrzej Malinowski]: “Pod wojskową dyktaturą: między ‘zamrożeniem’ a ‘restauracją’”, and WOŁOSZCZAK, Renata and ZWANIECKI, Andrzej [pseud. Edyta Podolska and Zdzisław Imielnicki]: “Spisek przeciwko prawdzie czyli techniki przemocy propagandowej”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik polityczny*, 12, 1982, 17-66 and 71-84, respectively; *Język propagandy* [oprac. Stefan Amsterdamski, Aldona Jawłowska, Tadeusz Kowalik], Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1979; *Manipulacja i obrona przed manipulacją: sesja na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim*, 1981, Warszawa, Adsum, [1984]; *Nowo-mowa: materiały z sesji naukowej poświęconej problemom współczesnego języka polskiego odbytej na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim w dniach 16 i 17 stycznia 1981* [red. Jolanta Rokoszowa, Wacław Twardzik], London, Polonia, 1985.

⁶²⁹ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 13.

⁶³⁰ See Geremek’s case study in Chapter 1.

⁶³¹ Friszke’s contribution to the discussion “Opozycja i opór ...”, 16.

⁶³² For Maryjane Osa, this was the single master frame that was able to comprise all opposition groups, with their different ideologies and even clashing interests. “Society vs. State” would be a more reduced

transmit a strong and clear message of nonconformity and resistance to their fellow countrymen.

Two powerful reasons *inteligenci* brandished to consider Communism alien to Polish and European culture was that it tried to suppress Poland's aspirations to independence and national differentiation. Andrzej Micewski, who published openly through *Tygodnik Powszechny*, hinted that regimes and states that were based on force and did not take on account the people over whom they ruled could not be considered truly European. Never mentioning PRL, he argued that nineteenth-century empires crumbled not only as a result of the First World War, but also because the national and social consciousness of Central and Eastern European peoples awakened and they refused to belong to a formation that was harmful to their interests. Fascist states personified strength, but their crimes, abuses and arbitrary acts against the population finally mobilized the civilized world against them. The same went for other cases beyond Europe, such as the colonies. The right to self-determination, Micewski deduced, was common to all humankind⁶³³.

The highest posts in Polish Communist government and Party saw Poland as part of the Soviet Union and were ready to demand help from "Big Brother" if their governmental monopoly was endangered, in Łepkowski's opinion. The PZPR was contradictory in essence, for it was formed by Poles but belonged to the world Communist movement controlled by Moscow, which was a key piece in the Cold War's system of blocks. Within the Communist apparatus, the author admitted, there was a clash between "internationalists", who wanted to copy the Soviet model, and more "liberal" and "national" factions, who wanted to attain as much autonomy from the Kremlin as possible. In his view, the majority of these struggles were won by "internationalists". After the bitter acceptance of their delicate geopolitical reality and the Warsaw Pact, at least between 1956 and 1981 most Poles recognized the State and the Party as Polish institutions, though they considered that its members didn't use up all the chances offered by the country's "limited sovereignty". In addition, authorities were far too partial to the Soviet Union to the detriment of Poland, not only in trade and economic exchanges, but also in their historical assessments, for, whereas the USSR's victories were glorified, national traditions and avatars were regarded very critically⁶³⁴.

Given this situation, many intellectuals feared an eventual "Sovietization" of Polish society in the name of "socialism", a term that certain movements which threatened European civilization and the world order had appropriated along the twentieth century, according to Bronisław Geremek. Regarding the ongoing debates about the potential fairness of unfairness of the market, the medievalist referred during a speech to Braudel's proposal to differentiate between the market, which was the soul of economic dynamics and a catalyst of human energies, and capitalism, which took to extremes the thirst for profits, tried to stand above the market's laws and generated inequalities and exploitation. He then added, in a similar way to his *Annales* teacher:

[It is necessary to recognize the market, C.A.] ... not only because present historical experience has taught us that it generates freedom. But perhaps also because to destroy the injustices of the market takes, like up until today, to the injustice of violence. And to substitute the market's omnipotence

action frame that is, nevertheless, predominant among the opposition intellectuals studied in this work. Osa: *Solidarity and Contention*..., 178-179.

⁶³³ Micewski: "Tożsamość...", 1-2; BAR, Joanna: "From Communism to Democracy: the Concept of Europe in Cracow's Press in the Years 1975-1995", in Faraldo, Gulińska-Jurgiel and Domnitz (Hg.): *Europa im Ostblock*..., 226-227.

⁶³⁴ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii*..., 54-55.

for state omnipotence takes to a worsening of economic effectiveness and of peoples' fate, since it deprives somebody's work of its sense and eliminates personal values.⁶³⁵

In line with this idea, Geremek also supported John Paul II's proposal to apply the philosophy of personalism to collective property and means of production. In the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, published on September 14th 1981, the Pope affirmed that socialization could only take place once agency (*podmiotowość*) was attained. In order to foster this process, it was very necessary to create intermediate organs independent from public powers and to link the property of capital to work⁶³⁶.

But would all of this be feasible in face of a Sovietization that was spreading like a cancer? The publicist and founder of the underground publishing house CDN⁶³⁷, Czesław Bielecki, considered that the vices of the Soviet system had penetrated in Poland much more than what was acknowledged by its inhabitants. The increasing dependence on the government and public institutions, the ineffectiveness of bureaucratization and the fact that many persons wanted to direct, govern or represent, but hardly anyone was willing to simply *act*, were negative symptoms, as well as the bad habits at work: some workers and peasants receiving a fixed income, regardless of the quality of their labor, spent the money in drink instead of investing it in something that improved their lives and made them more autonomous from authorities. Polish society should wake up quickly from that nightmarish slumber before it was too late:

Bolshevism was the offspring of the Russian nation's impotence. For centuries, mediocrity and enslavement have attained ranks, privileges and power in Russia. Soviet ideology takes these weaknesses and spreads them around the world as Good News. This diabolic trick is precisely the key that explains all about the almighty system in Poland. We must decide ourselves. Either we are the heirs of Christian civilization and Western culture, or we are the loiterers of bolshevism, halfway between Asia and Europe. If we have untransferable human rights, we must take the duties too, or be quiet and submissively accept Communism's 'rules of the game'.⁶³⁸

Not only Bielecki thought so: the rest of the members of Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe expressed very similar views in an essay entitled "Polska i Europa". In their opinion, no regime or economic system could be considered ideal, including democracy and free market. However, at least in the latter one could speak out freely about its flaws and problems. What should the Poles prefer: constant economic shortages, the lack of responsibility of governmental organisms, a Party-State imposing its will over national will, the unpunished destruction of the environment, to waste people's potential, the absence of morality at work, alcoholism and the falsification of social life (the negative characteristics the authors attribute to Communist regimes), or governmental instability due to the clashes between different parties, unemployment—in places where the unemployed receive subventions that could be tantamount to a young doctor's salary in the PRL, and the commercialization of culture (i.e. the defects of Western democracies)? They would prefer those disadvantages they can get to know and try to solve together, rather than harmful, insurmountable drawbacks that damaged society and reduced it to a dumb crowd without will. Since the eighteenth century, Poland could be European (by endorsing European imponderables, as we have seen above), or it could be Muscovite, there was no third option. "Though today we are

⁶³⁵ Geremek: "Dwa narody", 10, my transl.; also 5.

⁶³⁶ Geremek: "Dwa narody", 10; Bratkowski: *Encyklika...*,

⁶³⁷ In Polish, CDN is an abbreviation meaning "ciąg dalszy nastąpi", "to be continued". After the establishment of the Martial Law, it became one of the mottos *Solidarność* supporters used to express that the organization continued its struggle, though now in the underground.

⁶³⁸ Bielecki: "Program...", 69, my transl.

located in Moscow's orbit", PPN members said, "we have preserved to a certain extent our Europeanness—but its loss threatens us if we do not oppose to it"⁶³⁹. Hence, Poles should not remain passive and allow this forty-year process to continue its relentless advance.

Polish inhabitants could receive, nevertheless, a little help in this task from beyond their borders. Through his interviews and texts published in foreign media, Bronisław Geremek sounded a warning too in the late 1980s among Western European governments and public opinion, for they should also realize that a material, economic and civilizational abyss was rapidly cracking open between the Eastern Bloc and the rest of the continent, so that the Yalta military division was finally taking shape or consolidating in other, much deeper spheres of social life too. And that would surely have unexpected consequences for all:

Je suis angoissé. Nous quittons l'Europe. Vous rendez vous compte? Nous quittons l'Europe. Nous avons la crise de l'économie, notre parc de machines se fait de plus en plus vieillot, l'écart technologique prend des proportions catastrophiques, l'état des infrastructures est désolant, le niveau de santé de la nation se dégrade, l'écologie est en perdition. C'est une 'fosse de civilisation' qui se creuse sous nos yeux. La principale menace aujourd'hui, c'est cela, au-delà des critères simplement politiques et idéologiques nous assistons à un Yalta de civilisation, la division de l'Europe en deux parties, l'une développée et l'autre en arrière. Les conséquences peuvent en être tragiques pour la Pologne, mais aussi pour l'Europe de l'ouest et il serait temps que les occidentaux en prennent conscience.⁶⁴⁰

Thus, actually existing socialism had only brought about in the long run destruction, isolation, insufficiency, inefficiency, repression and backwardness in almost every field of Polish life and, by extension, of the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Jan Józef Lipski especially insisted on this last point because he was convinced that the first victim of Soviet ideology had been Russians themselves, who had seen how a good deal of their traditions and culture (eg. those related to the Orthodox Church) were destroyed or suppressed by the new Bolshevik State:

We, Poles, when speaking about Russians, say that the USSR is the heir and the continuation of the Tsarist empire in terms of aspirations and even of style, and that Russian nationalism played a crucial role in the Soviet expansion—but at the same time we do not like to remember that Soviet ideology, that attempted to destroy the national identity of Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians etc., tried to destroy with even more determination Russian national identity, tradition and culture. Soviet ideology is equally threatening and lethal for Poles as for Russians.⁶⁴¹

Another outstanding feature of so-called Communist governments was already hinted in our analysis of the 1989-1990 election posters: their absolute reluctance to change the system from within or to negotiate with non-Communists some kind of limited reforms. Many believed that the last proof of this ossification, the establishment of the Martial Law in the night of December 12th-13th, 1981, was being planned almost before *Solidarność* officially registered in November 1980, that is, when authorities

⁶³⁹ PPN, "Polska i Europa", 198-199, my transl.; also Beylin, Bieliński and Michnik: "Polska leży...", 1; Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 73.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview of Bernard Margueritte to Bronisław Geremek, *Le Figaro*, 21-XI-1986, transcribed in RFE: HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9; also GEREMEK, Bronisław: "Europa potrzebuje Polski", *L'Express*, December 12th, 1986, translated to Polish for RFE. Both in HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9. In the Polish media: Geremek: "Warszawska wiosna?", 1.

⁶⁴¹ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 52, my transl., also Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 27.

perceived (only too late) that a major transformation was taking place and that it could jeopardize their power monopoly⁶⁴². If at any point since the mid-1970s oppositionists had fantasized with the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Party-State out of the latter's goodwill, the image of General Wojciech Jaruzelski on television that evening ruined whatever was left of it for good:

The end of the Polish August [1980] means that the last chance for the system to evolve has exploded. It happened once again that Communism allows no reforms. Each thaw in satellite countries is regarded by Moscow as a mortal threat. For Communist authorities, anything that draws us closer to authentic democracy and authentic independence in the framework of a societal agreement, even by legal means, is a dangerous extremism. The only sensible tactics in this situation is, thus, the tactics used before by Communists themselves. To struggle within the system against the system, openly —with legal methods, and clandestinely —with illegal methods, but always ready for illegalization.⁶⁴³

But rather than imitating Communists, even if it was only tactically, *inteligencja* usually betted on a reinterpretation or an overturn of Marxist principles to show the incongruities of “socialist” regimes beyond the Berlin wall and, of course, to complain about them, either because they did not fulfill the socialist ideals they pledged, or to prove that Communism was essentially harmful for Poland and the rest of the region. We advanced some of these ideas with Kisielewski's comparison of the PRL elites with the most privileged layers of the medieval estates, but he was not the only one to draw such a parallel: Stefan Bratkowski also considered that, instead of providing justice and welfare to workers, as its ideology promised, the Polish government was treating them as feudal serfs. To “manumit” workers today would mean to allow them to participate in decisions and public life; that would be the basis, in his view, for a future industrial democracy⁶⁴⁴.

On the other hand, Czesław Bielecki advocated the recovery of the medieval and modern ages' spirit in the world of work and of opposition groups because he felt that the Soviet system was destroying the value of (and the pleasure in) basic work, which was so necessary, and the important contribution of middle posts in the transmission of knowledge, besides artificially separating decision making from practical work, which should be always combined:

As a result of the hereditary burden of *bolszewia*⁶⁴⁵, structures to govern and represent, but not to act, were established in *Solidarność*'s lowest and middle ranks. That is why after the outbreak of the phoney Polish war⁶⁴⁶, and on our side, one can see almost nothing but generals, colonels, captains, but there are not corporals and sergeants. How many times have I heard from the members of the *Solidarność* Factory Commissions ‘I actually should not act because I am under surveillance’. We already know what the next step is: Communist search for ‘manpower’ begins. In the meantime, within each organizational work there is a part of decision making and a part of executive performance: driving for hours, checking, getting in touch, writing, buying, packing, numbering. In ALL ranks of an organization these two elements co-exist. *Bolszewia* means to make the members of every rank above the mere worker (who is always imagined as someone in an assembly line) want only to decide and co-ordinate. Specific work is always pushed to the bottom, specific decisions are always pushed to the top. This way, a pyramid of bureaucrats

⁶⁴² Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 125-131.

⁶⁴³ Bielecki, “Nasza wielka...”, 43, my transl.

⁶⁴⁴ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: *Co zrobić, kiedy nic się nie da zrobić? Rzecz o samorządzie pracowniczym*, Wrocław, Inicjatywa Wydawnicza Aspekt, 1984, 4-5, 10.

⁶⁴⁵ A pejorative way to refer to Bolshevism and anything related to the Soviet Union

⁶⁴⁶ “Dziwna wojna”, “drôle de guerre” or “phoney war” was the name given to the first months of World War II in the Western front... In this case, Bielecki most probably referred to the first months of Martial Law period.

incapable of reaching an agreement in the end entrust the load of work to a single worker. Such an organizational structure deprives each working phase of its craftsmanship and creative components. Between the worker and the director, the master or overseer is still necessary. His rank is crucial: he makes possible that a person who knows how to work well and in a timely way performs what another person thought up well and in a timely way. An underground without masters, without those who are capable of showing with their own hands how something can and should be done, will never work well. A conspiratorial organization formed by *roboli*⁶⁴⁷ and directors, by subordinates and managers will never defeat communists. We must reinstate the ethos of the master and the merchant⁶⁴⁸ within us against *bolszewia*. Because the essence of a 'sovietized' organization is that, instead of working with people, it works by using people as tools.⁶⁴⁹

The essences of the feudal world and early capitalism were, in Bielecki's eyes, the right weapons to counteract an unsuccessful socialist model that was supposedly going to surpass both previous "stages" and put an end to exploitation. The ethos of the master and the merchant represented to him hard work, industriousness, organizational efficiency, practical guidance and the urge to improve, in contrast to the behaviors that Communism stimulated in practice among factory workers and peasants, which acted against their humaneness.

Bratkowski, for his part, reminded his readers that Communism was neither the single nor the best remedy against injustice and workers' problems, despite what official propaganda might say. In the first pages of his book *Co zrobić, kiedy nic się nie da zrobić?* [What to do when nothing can be done?], the author went through the highlights of the Catholic Church's social doctrine, from Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* to John Paul II's *Laborem exercens* (popularly known as "the workers' gospel"), to show that religion was not *das Opium des Volkes*. The rest of the book is devoted to the results that different initiatives related to workers' welfare and self-government rendered in other countries, especially France, Great Britain and the U.S.: Robert Owen's utopian socialism, Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Pierre Leroux, how 1848 revolutions fueled the formation of workers' associations, Edme Jean Leclaire, Jean-Baptiste André Godin's *Familistère*, etc. The point was to encourage Poles to start up similar organizations and reduce their dependence on a system that had actually destroyed the heritage of authentic, democratic and progressive workers' movements in the country... in the name of so-called "socialism"⁶⁵⁰.

Another way to show the contradictions between Marxist ideas and actually existing socialism was by resorting to the "revolution argument". Could a revolutionary socialist government have established Martial Law? Michnik's opinion was clear in this respect: "The military *coup* of December did not attempt to realize the Communist utopia —it was a classic anti-worker counterrevolution carried out to defend the conservative interests of the *ancien régime*"⁶⁵¹. Therefore, such recoil was incompatible with Marx's progressive view of history. Of course, things could and should improve, but that would only happen by means of what the KPN leader Romuald Szeremietiew defined as "the great national revolution" of *Solidarność* (*Wielka Rewolucja Narodowa*), that was changing political and social structures to build a free, democratic and rich Poland. On the other extreme, the PZPR would be a counterrevolutionary force representing all that was reactionary, retarded and unfair, and would still be in power only because of its use of violence and its control over repressive organs. In this sense,

⁶⁴⁷ In Polish, "roboł" is a pejorative way to refer to a worker.

⁶⁴⁸ *Majster* and *kupiec*, respectively.

⁶⁴⁹ Bielecki: "Program...", 69-70, my transl., capital letters and underlining in the original.

⁶⁵⁰ Bratkowski: *Co zrobić...*?

⁶⁵¹ Michnik: "Polska Wojna", 3, my transl.

Szeremietiew completely agreed with Marx's saying "cruelty is issued by cowardice"⁶⁵².

Despite counteracting Polish Communist government in every possible way, opposition intellectuals' belief in progress (which, of course, can be found in many doctrines beyond Marxism) did not waver. After all, they were struggling to make the country and their personal conditions better. However, it was crucial to be able to tell apart real progress from "so-called progress". Either society advanced as a whole, or something was wrong in the system.

According to the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, the main mistake of Marxist theory was its reductionism. Historical processes were far more complex and unpredictable than what Marxism-Leninism ever acknowledged so that, for instance, national feelings or religion could play a crucial role in a country, not against the workers, but in their benefit. On the contrary, patriotism was used by Lenin as a mere tool for the benefit of the Russian Communist regime and was in fact regarded as an obstacle for the internationalist union of the working class. But in no way everything could be explained through class struggle: *Solidarność*, a pro-independent and pro-working class movement with Catholic roots that had stood up against actually existing socialism, proved PRL history textbooks wrong⁶⁵³.

To some extent, these impressions resembled classic historicism due to the importance given to the nation building process and, within it, to the political sphere. However, in Poland's case it was not the nation-state and its institutions what mattered, but the nation alone and society's autonomous organizations, so that history should be written bottom to top, from grass-roots level (the represented) upwards (to the political representatives), not the other way round.

B) Snapshots of Polish society throughout time

That is precisely history's lesson, that despite everything no martyrdom is worthless. Those who died for an idea always won beyond the grave. Their sacrifice cannot be indifferent to the next generations. Hence, tradition is an integral part of national consciousness and if a nation must exist, if it mustn't die vilely, it must develop its traditions.

Henryk Wereszycki: "Przedmowa" (my transl.)

Only the past of those who fought for a noble cause and fell by the wayside is left. The chance of hope lies in the desperate. Within that despair there is hope albeit defeated, in a latent state, waiting to be awakened by contemporaries who are equally spurred by despair.

Reyes Mate: *Medianoche en la historia* (my transl.)

According to Bronisław Geremek, the interest in the history of the Polish nation, plus its most recurrent topics and characteristic interpretations (optimism-pessimism, independence question), stem at the very latest from the nineteenth-century partition period and permeated Polish society's ways of regarding history writing ever since:

⁶⁵² Romuald Szeremietiew's speech in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 7 and 9.

⁶⁵³ KOŁAKOWSKI, Leszek: "Świadomość narodowa i rozkład komunizmu", in 1956. *W dwadzieścia lat...*, 26-27; BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Ciąg dalszy nastąpi", in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 53.

... l'opinion polonaise reste toujours sensible au débat centenaire entre la vision pessimiste et optimiste de l'histoire polonaise ainsi qu'au problème complexe de l'indépendance nationale. On retrouve la même continuité dans la problématique des recherches où, malgré le changement du paradigme ou de l'appareil conceptuel, la prédilection pour tels thèmes ou telles façons de comprendre semble rattacher l'historiographie actuelle au travail du siècle précédent, et parfois plus loin encore.⁶⁵⁴

He further admitted that, in his fatherland's case, the need to look for responsibilities (memory) and the need to suggest some kind of future-oriented strategy (purpose) actually entwined, making history and politics go hand in hand in the search of the truth of the past: "La vérité sur le passé est toujours restée en Pologne enchevêtrée dans les enjeux politiques, et le vieux débat sur les causes de la perte de l'indépendance: faut-il conspirer contre l'occupant? Ou bien les Polonais ont-ils été victimes de leur penchant atavique à la conspiration (*liberum conspiro*)?"⁶⁵⁵. Historians, thus, responded to Polish society's concern about the source of the nation's unease, but also to its demand about what should be done *next*: "Le public attendait que l'historien lui livre un enseignement du passé clairement orienté vers l'action"⁶⁵⁶. This fulfills *inteligencja*'s classic duties of social representation and guidance and also matches its traditional determination to solve national problems —or at least to consider them under a new, more comprehensible light.

The fact that the birth of modern Polish historiography coincided with the disappearance of Poland as a state influenced history writing and the way historians conceived their task more than any methodological claims. As a result, Geremek complained, Polish readers were always most interested in contemporary history, something which, from his *annaliste* point of view, reinforced classic researches on political history, whereas analyses of core, long-term problems such as mentalities and political structures did not arouse much curiosity. In his opinion, the essential role that freedom and free will played in these customary narratives greatly contributed to the association of socio-economic approaches to deterministic postulates, which were virtually alien to Polish historical tradition:

L'histoire politique accepte difficilement les éclairages de la sociologie et de l'économie, car elle semble angoissée par le spectre du déterminisme. L'histoire politique, écrivit Władysław Konopczyński (1880-1952)⁶⁵⁷, un disciple d'Askenazy⁶⁵⁸ à Cracovie, 'semble répondre à tous les possibles et à l'appel de liberté... L'histoire ne prend de sens que comme histoire des responsabilités humaines'. Cette attitude recèle un certain conservatisme méthodologique, mais elle répond bien aux expériences et aux aspirations de la Pologne.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ Geremek: "Pologne...", 529.

⁶⁵⁵ Geremek: "Pologne...", 523-524.

⁶⁵⁶ Geremek: "Pologne...", 523.

⁶⁵⁷ Władysław Konopczyński (1880-1952) was a Polish historian, first editor in chief and co-author of the *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [*Polish Biographical Dictionary*]. He taught at the Jagiellonian University and was a member of parliament in the first years of the Second Republic. He took part in the Polish-Bolshevik War, was enjailed during the Second World War and ultimately interned in a Nazi concentration camp. In 1948, he was forced to resign from his university post by the new Communist government.

⁶⁵⁸ Szymon Askenazy (1866-1935) was a Polish historian and professor at Lwów University. Contrary to Cracovian School's pessimistic interpretation of Polish history, he specialized in 18th and 19th-century political and diplomatic history of Poland and started up the Lwów-Warsaw School of History (or "Askenazy School").

⁶⁵⁹ Geremek: "Pologne...", 532.

In opposition intellectuals' eyes, freedom (or, in its absence, the wish for freedom) was Polish nation's hallmark since the late Middle Ages. In times when, as under Communism, that freedom was maimed or simply trampled, there was an growing need to insist in the two aforementioned aspects of the question of choice: firstly, in why had things occurred as they did (causes and responsibilities) and secondly, in the idea that change was not only possible, but within society's reach. The former could be carried out with a view to explain, uncover, understand, condemn or justify but, in any case, it ultimately aimed to promote the latter, that is, to find in the past the courage and the lessons people required to avoid previous mistakes and transform things in the present. This way, historical reflection became a potential form of action.

B.1) Modern times until the Postwar period

In Tadeusz Łepkowski's view, dependence or half-dependence had been Polish people's most usual condition throughout time, but especially since the First Partition. Structurally, this meant a long feudal period, followed by a dependent, weak and peripheral capitalism and, finally, a "dependent socialism" against the will of the majority of society⁶⁶⁰ —a disappointing albeit more realistic version, by the way, of the theoretical stages to cover in order to achieve a fair, free and idealized Communist social organization. Nevertheless, Poland's socio-political strength, medium-high development and its repeated struggles against this situation made it have a fair chance of finally overcoming it:

When the socio-cultural level of a given country is low, to become dependent means to fall almost into despair. The Polish case is different not just because its "point of departure into dependence" was not the worst. Throughout most of these two hundred-odd years of dependence Poles have fought in various ways against it (however, let's not deceive ourselves: not everybody and not everywhere) to destroy it or, in any case, to put a limit to it. One may gather a considerable dose of optimism from that fact.⁶⁶¹

Hence, pro-independence initiatives, revolts and uprisings amongst the Poles cannot be considered an exceptional or even a closed phase in history. Quite on the contrary, they have become a kind of constant in a long-term framework which is still ongoing⁶⁶². This did not mean, of course, that every step taken towards such goal was a wise one: Jan Józef Lipski, for instance, considered the Messianism embraced by the best nineteenth-century poets and thinkers as a helping hand to endure defeats, but also as a likely cause of the following ones⁶⁶³.

Whilst under the three empires' control, the subject-agent of Polish history was not a state-nation in the making, as elsewhere in Western Europe, but a stateless nation aiming to attain a state of its own. It was then when a crucial process began to take place: national consciousness bloomed and spread from noble and educated strata to lower social classes, together with hatred for a foreign, oppressive and invasive state⁶⁶⁴. From the mid-nineteenth century until the interwar period, Polish peasantry experienced

⁶⁶⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 15-17.

⁶⁶¹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 15, my transl.

⁶⁶² ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: "Anatomia polskich powstań narodowych", *Zeszyty Studium Nauki Społecznej Kościoła*, 11, 1986, 14.

⁶⁶³ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 67.

⁶⁶⁴ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 13-14; Wereszycki: "Przedmowa", 5 and 9.

the end of serfdom, the conferment of land ownership and educational progresses which gradually led to national awareness. There is no denying that this was a long, winding and painful road (bloodsheds in Galicja, participation in the January 1863 Uprising...) dotted with the peasants' persistent animosity towards lords and a new mistrust of bourgeoisie but, according to Łepkowski, by the end of that time the sons of peasantry could be considered "full Poles", which assured the nation high chances of survival and development⁶⁶⁵.

This historian, as well as other intellectual oppositionists, liked to ascribe to each of the most prominent groups forming Polish society certain general features, idiosyncrasies, characteristic behaviors and ways of thinking, just like they did in their own case. Never departing from present-day concerns and realities, some *inteligenci* tended to believe that the best qualities of each class played a role in the opposition to PRL government and could be tracked down to some point of the past, ancient or more recent.

The peasants, Poland's main social basis until not very long ago, were given in these narratives an outstanding individualistic character. They represented resistance to change, whereas active or passive, together with defense of the ownership of the land:

The Polish farmer understands the strength of solidary collectivity and knows how to associate, but he joins cooperatives, circles and organizations as an independent individual. Hence his firm anti-collectivism and anti-communitarianism. The idea that the multitude is above the individual is rejected by the Polish peasant. He loves what he owns, he is and wants to be the householder and the lord at home. He recognizes the army's discipline, knows how to submit himself to the state (not to bureaucracy), but rejects the cruel collectivism that makes him play the role of a worker serving a foreign lord and, thus, be deprived of property.

The Polish peasant has preserved till today a high sense of life concreteness and political realism. He doesn't like nice, lengthy speeches. He is distrustful and hard to "move", and at the same time consistent and obstinate when he is convinced about something. He regards national and state issues in a similar way as his economy. He values hard, patient and systematic work, ability and taking care of property, of the goods obtained from work. He can't stand being indoctrinated or manipulated by power.⁶⁶⁶

Being the social group that had least transformed in the last century, relatively speaking, such description of peasantry intended to highlight continuity between past (partition) and present (Communist) political systems in terms of unfairness, state control, lack of ownership and demagoguery. However, what could have become the biggest social force in Poland if united, soon gave way to divisions, constant party foundation and dissolution, personal, regional and ideological disputes. Due to competing interests, by the 1930s Polish peasantry formed a very fragmented political landscape⁶⁶⁷. Nevertheless, its "spirit" as described by Łepkowski reappeared in PRL times and avoided land collectivization, a major achievement and contribution to the weakening of the Communist apparatus.

This historian also suggested that, in a certain sense, Polish peasantry handed over the baton of political pre-eminence to the working class, especially after the First World War. Certainly, it was not an easy task for a multinational social stratum to get used to a new state-nation context and border reconfiguration, chiefly among the eldest, but thanks to younger generations and to Polish government's will of accelerating industrialization and modernization, workers became more united and played a fundamental role in the democratic building of the reborn State.

⁶⁶⁵ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 22-23.

⁶⁶⁶ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 23-24, my transl.

⁶⁶⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 24-25.

In Łepkowski's eyes, Polish workers are honest and able in their job. They feel linked to their factory, have a high sense of dignity both in their lives and working places and appreciate professional knowledge and qualification, for they have a will to improve. In contrast to Germans, Jews or Ukrainians, Polish workers usually place a greater emphasis in their religious beliefs (Catholicism); however, this doesn't interfere with their support of different socialist movements. Like the peasants, they are individualistic and support pluralism so that, despite their sense of honor, class dignity and solidarity, they don't have a "herd instinct". Brave, obstinate, persevering and ready to make sacrifices, their claims and fighting spirit are decidedly revolutionary⁶⁶⁸.

Through this description, even vaguer and more stereotyped than the peasant one, the author insisted on the same idea, that is, that the premises of actually existing socialist regimes were essentially incompatible with the Poles' national ethos and different class identities —something that was perhaps slightly less clear back in the late nineteenth century in the workers' case, but that gained force along the Second Republic and the following historical periods:

Generally speaking, it can be said that (...) in the Polish labor movement the socialist nuclei of different shades (PPS was never "monolithic") had a decisive importance and, to a lesser extent, the Christian-democrats, that the Communist nucleus, especially after 1918, was marginal and usually regarded as a foreign agent and [that] the majority of the workers' movement, both in political parties and trade unions, had anti-Communist and anti-Soviet positions.⁶⁶⁹

After bearing witness to or actually getting involved in the workers' protests and revolts during Communist times (1956, 1970, 1976), critical intellectuals understood that the Polish working class was and would be, more than ever, the engine of change, and their clashes with PRL authorities the best and most tragic example of the inconsistencies and injustices of a system that proudly defined itself as "dictatorship of the proletariat"⁶⁷⁰.

Within oppositionists' historical narratives, the two main social groups in Poland, besides *inteligencja* itself, converged in their evolution towards resistance against the Communist regime. However, Polish twentieth-century annals were far from being stainless. Just as it happened with previous epochs, it was Jan Józef Lipski who first put the finger on the wound when he spoke out about anti-Semitism in the interwar period.

To approach such episodes was an important step towards a more balanced and self-critical view of history, not just due to their recent (and hence much more delicate) character, but because the events took place when Poland was an independent State, and therefore it was not possible to turn a blind eye and blame foreign powers and ideologies for those excesses and crimes, like during partitions or the following Nazi invasion.

During the Second Republic, anti-Semitic feelings spread across Polish political spectrum, especially in the right and far right groups, like the National-Democratic Party (later renamed as National Party) and its eventually banned by-products: the Camp of Great Poland, the National Radical Camp and Falanga National Radical Camp. The latter, studied in detail by Lipski⁶⁷¹, resembled other totalitarian fascist movements in Europe. Besides questioning Jewish minority's citizen rights, promoting economic

⁶⁶⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 25-28.

⁶⁶⁹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 29, my transl.

⁶⁷⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 30-31; POMIAN, Krzysztof: "Robotnicy i sekretarze", in *1956. W dwadzieścia lat...*, 82-83, 90-92; Smolar: "Prosta i koło", 97.

⁶⁷¹ LIPSKI, Jan Józef: *Antysemityzm ONR "Falangi"*, [Warszawa], Wydawnictwo Myśl, [1985] and *Totalizm i demokracja w oczach ONR "Falangi"*, Warszawa, Biblioteka Kultury Niezależnej, 1987.

boycott and pogroms in villages and high schools, its press even suggested the extermination of Jews in the country.

But what was more worrying, in terms of figures and relevance, was the behavior of the rest of Polish society: opposition was feeble, there was no organization beyond individual acts of solidarity and bravery, and even the Church and many Catholic groups adopted an alarmingly indifferent attitude towards their Jewish compatriots' fate⁶⁷². "I must fairly say", wrote Władysław Bartoszewski, "[that] if I had assimilated everything I heard about the Jews at school and in church —I would have become anti-Semite. Only inner resistance against nonsense and thought coercion enabled me to defend Jews in the War"⁶⁷³.

As it turned out, finally "...somebody else built the wall around the ghetto, scalded with boiling water and destroyed. The prisons and concentration camps that the followers of Bolesław Piasecki⁶⁷⁴ wanted to fill with Jews and with the Poles who, in their opinion, served the Jews, were not directed" by them⁶⁷⁵. However, this only meant that ONR "Falanga" didn't get the chance to do it, and that Polish society also had its share of responsibility in the subsequent European tragedy promoted by the Nazis. If it hadn't been for that poisonous anti-Semitic substratum and its uncontrolled growth in the 1930s, Lipski reflected, who knows how many more Jews could have been saved in Polish lands afterwards...⁶⁷⁶.

The ordeal of the Second World War, thus, entailed potentially controversial views and memories that, once again, challenged Polish nation's status of "victim of history" in historical discourses. On the one hand, Poland was on the "right side" of the War and could, supposedly, feel guiltless as to the responsibility of its outburst, crimes and defeat. Furthermore, Polish Underground Government and the delegate of Warsaw Jews informed and warned Great Britain and the United States about extermination camps and Nazi mass crimes against the Jews, but encountered with disbelief and indifference⁶⁷⁷. On the other hand, the radicalization and totalitarian turn of Polish politics the decade before the War was undeniable, and the anti-Semitic atmosphere of fear and mistrust exclusively national. Through their acts or omissions, out of fear, selfishness or greed, and leaving aside open aggressions (attacks, denunciations, collaboration in persecution, bribery, frauds...), Lipski believed that Polish civilians didn't do enough to help, protect and save as many Jewish fellow-citizens as possible in 1939-1945. And that included himself as a Home Army member during Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 19th - May 16th, 1943), in which he and the majority of his companions didn't bother to take part: "This shame and remorse torments many of us. Back then, it was easier to think that we shouldn't die by the walls of the fighting Ghetto"⁶⁷⁸.

Interestingly, suffering and sacrifice also provided important points of convergence between the catastrophe of the Holocaust and the ethos of *inteligencja*, as seen by the latter. Władysław Bartoszewski is the best example of it. He participated in the defense of Warsaw in September 1939 and then worked for the Red Cross. In September 1940 he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where he spent eight months

⁶⁷² Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 61.

⁶⁷³ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 49, my transl.

⁶⁷⁴ Bolesław Piasecki (1915-1979) was the leader of the National Radical Camp Falanga. After the Second World War, he supported PRL regime and founded the Catholic association Pax.

⁶⁷⁵ Lipski: *Antysemitizm ONR...*, 78, my transl.

⁶⁷⁶ Lipski: "O sensie powstania...", 86-87; Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 60, 64.

⁶⁷⁷ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 48; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: "Czy Polacy są sympatyczni?", in Kisielowski: *Lata połączane...*, 589.

⁶⁷⁸ Lipski: "O sensie powstania...", 84-85 (quotation from 84, my transl.); Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 61-64.

before being freed. The camp, he recalled decades later, was firstly designed to get rid of Polish *inteligencja* (1940-1941) and it was only about a year or a year and a half later when it began to be used to massacre Jewish population in the gas chambers⁶⁷⁹. German invaders had the same plans for intellectuals and Jews alike, so they shared a victim status, a tragic fate. Besides this, the prevalence of physical strength supported by the Nazis was contrary to *inteligencja*'s ethos:

It was abominable to the highest degree: this display of force, boots, propaganda —brutal, physical violence. Many people in Poland, intellectual people, said to themselves back then: our strength can only emanate from our hearts and minds, it must come from the soul.

We, Poles, dreaded the annihilation of the nation, of its language, of its culture, of its mere existence.⁶⁸⁰

Within Bartoszewski's first-hand experience, fear for national survival and the moral dilemma of having personally survived horror merged and gave birth to a strong sense of duty which was directly related to his self-identification as an intellectual and as a Catholic believer. The crimes committed beyond the conventions of war against Polish civilians, Jews and non-Jews alike, produced pain and grief that had to be eased through active knowledge and remembrance, both in the meantime but, especially, in the aftermath. The gift of life had to be somehow returned, the mission was "to act against hatred, against violence —against all hatred and all violence"⁶⁸¹. Hence, Bartoszewski found a meaning in the suffering of Polish people, but chiefly a meaning to carry on with life once the suffering was over:

The families of prisoners who died in the [extermination] camp helped me [in my health recovery after Auschwitz, April 1941]. But there was a problem for me: I lived on, whereas they had died. Eventually a question took shape in my mind: I live —but why? This is a duty for me. There are no coincidences in life. I am a believer. If I live, it means that I must help others.⁶⁸²

Why precisely so? [to act against hatred and violence, C.A.] Because we, Poles, fell as victims of hatred and violence. The role of those who suffer is contained in our Messianism, so richly expressed in our literature as well. But those who suffer must carry the torch of good, not of evil. This is the secret of what the New Testament demands from us: conversion.

We want to be those who understand, who know. (...) We believed in God's justice. We remembered Warsaw inhabitants who died on the snow, during the first bombing of the city in September 1939. We remembered executions carried out without choice, when people were taken out of the shops —ordinary people, not politicians, not soldiers. Also ordinary women and children. One knew how to differentiate between someone who fell in the battle front and a victim of murder. My fellow countrymen, who lost their fathers and sons in the battle front, somewhere in England or France, in the sea, in the air, for example during the battle of London —they knew that they fell as soldiers. This notion does not produce a feeling of revenge. It is war. One does not hate personally the German soldiers who perpetrated that death. But when somebody fell as a victim of a murder, not in the battle front, a deep hatred surfaced among people. A soldier is a soldier —we understood this, it was the way we had been trained before the War. A soldier who behaves decently can be respected. But not the murderer of innocent women and children who, to add insult to injury, claimed that he accomplished orders. What happened to Poles was beyond all code of conduct in wartime. Even more so what happened to the Jewish nation.⁶⁸³

Survivor-victims had a moral duty towards perished victims. This is how two outstanding fights of the War, Warsaw Ghetto and Warsaw Uprisings, were understood

⁶⁷⁹ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 45.

⁶⁸⁰ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 46, my transl.

⁶⁸¹ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 46, my transl.

⁶⁸² Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 23, my transl.

⁶⁸³ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 46-47, my transl.

by some too. An apparently “pointless” struggle or sacrifice is not so useless if remembered and honored. Spiritual strength, in contrast to physical, would be gathered precisely from past defeats.

As to the Jews’ revolt, Lipski commented:

This fight was not undertaken [by the rebellious] in defense of their lives, for they could have saved them by fleeing—but in defense of human dignity. Therefore, it was mainly a symbolic act, with scarce practical influence, but with an immense moral meaning both for Jews and for the rest of humanity, especially for the Polish nation.

It is our duty to reflect on the meaning of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising if we esteem that the values in whose name the insurgents fought are equally binding on us. It is therefore a duty not only towards the memory of the fallen, but also towards ourselves. In addition, many of us witnessed the tragedy of Jews in Poland, which is also binding—even if just to bear testimony. If the Polish nation and Warsaw forgot about them, about its victims—we would not deserve to put into practice the values in whose defense the Ghetto rebels died.⁶⁸⁴

Stefan Kisielewski had a similar view of Warsaw Uprising (August 1st – October 2nd, 1944), in which he took part. Despite his later criticism about its convenience, he also pointed out once that, even if many of its participants were fully conscious of its flaws and didn’t pin their hopes on actual victory (which was regarded as very improbable), they nevertheless fought as if they counted on it, until their last breath, for they were impelled by something beyond material hope, as if it was a moral testimony or a cry for help whose echoes would reach beyond that moment, or even beyond their lifetime⁶⁸⁵. Łepkowski pondered on this too in a more general fashion that linked Polish past and present-day situations:

[In the twentieth century,] Evil attained technical abilities bordering on perfection. However, courage, braveness (for it’s not an empty, arrogant action) can vanquish modern dictatorships—though not without victims—or, if not, can at least broaden successfully the margins of freedom in a captive country. Braveness plays a crucial role in this resistance (...), usually based on a deep faith in God; braveness in the Christian sense of the word, based on the deep conviction that ‘they’ cannot ultimately win, that in the most extreme cases ‘those who kill the body (...) after that can do nothing more’ (Luke, 12:4).⁶⁸⁶

In sum, the experience of Polish society and its Jewish community during the Second World War acquired in a few intellectuals’ narratives a kind of cathartic or expiatory value⁶⁸⁷. However, it is a fact that the Jewish question in particular was rarely

⁶⁸⁴ Lipski: “O sensie powstania...”, 82, my transl., also 43.

⁶⁸⁵ KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Czy pesymizm jest postawą?”, in Kisielewski: *Lata poślacane...*, 699.

⁶⁸⁶ ŁEPKOWSKI, Tadeusz: “O lęku społecznym i odwadze. Rozważania historyczne”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 25, 1987, 13, my transl. Also Micewski: “W przeszłość...”, 409.

⁶⁸⁷ Lipski, for instance, wished that “the rapprochement of the annihilated nation and the nation still living and their cultures would take place in the spirit of a communion of saints”. Lipski: “O sensie powstania...”, 88, my transl.

See the debates stirred up by the release of the film *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985) and, especially, by Jan Błoński’s article on Polish co-responsibility for the Nazi extermination of Jews in Poland two years later, plus the international conference on the history and culture of Polish Jews held in Jerusalem (31 January-5 February 1988): GEBERT, Konstanty [pseud. Dawid Warszawski]: “Historia i fałszerze”, *KOS*, 75, 19-V-1985, 6-7; KRAJEWSKI, Stanisław [pseud. Abel Kainer]: “Polacy wobec Żydów w czasie Wojny”, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 128, 9-V-1985, 3; BŁOŃSKI, Jan: “Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 11-I-1987, 1 and 4; SIŁA-NOWICKI, Władysław: “Janowi Błońskiemu w odpowiedzi”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 22-II-1987, 5; KULERSKI, Wiktor: “Zatruta dusza narodu (wobec antysemityzmu)”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 25, 1987, 214-215; MICHNIK, Adam: “Uparta pokusa prawdy (wobec filosemityzmu)”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 25, 1987, 216-217; KERSTEN,

studied by oppositionists (either of Jewish or non-Jewish origins) until the late 1980s and, when done so, it was usually as a separate topic, without a direct connection with *inteligencja*'s recurrent ideas about the Polish nation. Rather than being implicitly included in it, thus, the Jews were considered a distinct national group or merely "forgotten". In addition, the question of guilt and the knowledge about tragic, shameful and controversial issues spread beyond War times and materialized in more recent and complex phenomena, like the persecutions and murders of the surviving Jewish population in the second half of the 1940s⁶⁸⁸ and the governmental anti-Semitic campaign in 1968⁶⁸⁹. It was indeed, as Lipski alone ceaselessly reminded, one of Polish society's major contemporary failures.

But, in the Postwar period, surviving Poles would have to endure yet another moral disaster to which intellectuals devoted much more time and many more pages: the submission to Communist power.

B.2) The Postwar period: Communists' takeover of power and the defeat of society

Like Benjamin pictured, the historian Krystyna Kersten's bet for the future, and therefore the political character underlying in her works, is clear: for her, *real* change is not tantamount to a "counter-attack" of non-Communist historians, that is, to a coarse return of the past issues and arguments that Communist power had disposed of in the rubbish dump of history. To replace certain theories, terms and interpretations by others would imply to pay somebody back in his own coin, a mere swap of impositions, thus not an advance at all. For what would be the use of former victims setting themselves up as victorious if they produced more victims by doing so? The process would lack the same morality they demanded from previous winners. The real, perhaps single way to go forward is by acquiring knowledge and by understanding in depth Polish postwar history through critical, independent thought⁶⁹⁰.

Kersten stopped by that rubbish dump of history she mentioned in a different fashion: as a plain historian-ragman, and not as one who wished to become the next historian-winner. Within her texts, especially in *Narodziny systemu władzy*, she "recovered" nothing less than Polish society among the rubble by remembering how it was terrorized by the new political authorities and left aside of decision-making

Krystyna: "Rozważania wokół podziemia, 1944-1947 (I)", *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 25, 1987, 73-104; ZIMAND, Roman: *Piołun i popiół (czy Polacy i Żydzi wzajem się nienawidzą?)*, Warszawa, Biblioteka Kultury Niezależnej, 1987; CAŁA, Alina: *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej*, Warszawa, In Plus, 1988; DIEHL, Jackson: "Debate over Poland's share of responsibility for Holocaust", *The Washington Post*, 27-IV-1987 and KAUFMAN, Michael T.: "Debate over the Holocaust stirs Poles", *The New York Times*, 8-III-1987, both articles as B-wires in HU OSA 300-55-10 (Subject Files, 1972-1990), box 38, file "Żydzi, 1984-1989"; KERSTEN, Krystyna: "Polscy historycy w Jerozolimie", *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 239, 17-II-1988, 3 and TUROWICZ, Jerzy: "O sprawach polsko-żydowskich w Jerozolimie", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 28-II-1988, 1-2.

More in Davies: *God's Playground...*, 240-266; IRWIN-ZARECKA, Iwona: *Neutralizing Memory. The Jew in Contemporary Poland*, New Brunswick/ London, Transaction Publishers, 1990; IRWIN-ZARECKA, Iwona: *Frames of Remembrance. The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, New Brunswick/ London, Transaction Publishers, 1994.

⁶⁸⁸ Lipski: "O sensie powstania...", 87; Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 64-65; GROSS, Jan T.: *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, New York, Random House, 2006.

⁶⁸⁹ KARPIŃSKI, Jakub [pseud. Marek Tarniewski]: *Krótkie spięcie (marzec 1968)*, [Warszawa], (Przedruk za Instytut Literacki, Paris), [1988].

⁶⁹⁰ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 8, similarly Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 5.

processes in the mid-1940s. Communists who voluntarily submitted to Moscow's will, in their turn, subdued Polish society through different means, hence depriving Poles of their historical and political agency (*podmiotowość*). Kersten's "revenge" for that moral crime consisted of a "claim for justice", plus an inclusive proposal: those who had suffered or were currently suffering would be rehabilitated both in the past and in the present through today's remembrance, but not by betraying the truth and using history for one's own benefit, or to please authorities, because a scenario with "new" defeated and "new" winners must be urgently avoided. In this sense, it is also significant that she quoted the following fragment of a song by the musician Jacek Kaczmarski right at the beginning of her work on Yalta agreements: "Only victims don't make mistakes / And that's how Yalta must be understood" ("Tylko ofiary się nie mylą / i tak rozumieć trzeba Jaltę")⁶⁹¹.

Kersten's comment in *Narodziny systemu...* can also be understood as a warning against attempts to re-build past political ideologies and ways in the present or, in other words, to try to restore the "past-that-did-take-place" (Polish Second Republic period) before the latest "defeat" (Second World War + Communist seizure of power) by putting into practice fifty- or sixty-year-old, even nineteenth-century socio-political thoughts.

For her, the recovery of what was lost and repressed would be of a moral and intellectual nature, and should be used as a starting point to build a different reality in which everybody counts. This reality would be new because it bears in mind present circumstances, including all that occurred in the last forty years. Thus, it was not a question of stopping time to take it up again at a certain, more favorable point of the past, but of stopping it to change its course *now* and fill it with meaning. That is, to transform into real the latent ideals and values that had been cut short in Polish history, such as independence, freedom and democracy, so that a "regenerated" society, which has "recovered" historical knowledge, memory and *podmiotowość*, can take charge of its future once and for all.

In order to contribute to this historical knowledge and rehabilitation of victims, Kersten approached the circumstances in which Poles arrived to the elections of January 1947. She pointed out, for instance, that by Spring 1945, after more than five years standing War and systematic physical extermination in its own territory, Polish society was not only greatly damaged, but also exhausted, disoriented and disappointed both with its government-in-exile and with Western allies due, among other things, to the Yalta Agreements, which were interpreted by many as a betrayal and an abandonment. Some kind of order and re-organization of postwar life was badly needed and, for this reason, many waited impatiently for their towns and villages to be liberated by the Red Army, which was advancing westwards.

On the other hand, in the meantime the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) managed to not be perceived as a mere occupation power. All social groups, including a considerable number of *inteligenci*, began to carry out different activities to rebuild the country, which were seen as a must in order to preserve its social and biological existence. This didn't mean that the majority of Poland's inhabitants supported actively PKWN and the idea of establishing a Communist government: the interaction between society and PKWN was limited and Communists met reluctance frequently. Polish society was somehow "forced" to a provisional commitment with the new authorities, but tried to move away as far as possible from capitulation. However, passiveness was beginning to spread, and fears to rise, the hopes for a real victory

⁶⁹¹ KERSTEN, Krystyna: *Jalta w polskiej perspektywie*, London/Warszawa, Aneks/Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1989, 7, my transl.

mingling with the conviction of the need of going back to “normal life” regardless of what kind of government and system was established.

After the 1946 referendum, which was carried out as a first rehearsal and in order to gain some time, Polish Communists tried to “persuade” the population through propaganda and other less subtle means about the convenience of supporting them in the forthcoming elections: by affirming, for instance, that a change of regime would entail the loss of the recently-incorporated Western territories, by resorting to patriotic and nationalist slogans and leaving aside the economic and class contents of their program, by attacking physically and verbally their political opponents and “partners” in the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN), such as Mikołajczyk’s PSL, or by repressing anybody else who complained or opposed to the new powers⁶⁹². This was the way they ended up destroying whatever remained of people’s resistance, by denying them any change expectations, making them give up and accept *faits accomplis*. To only force people to participate in the elections and vote for the Polish Workers’ Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) wasn’t so crucial or had such long-lasting effects, because, in any case,

the results of the elections could always be falsified. It was above all a psychological operation: a tired society had to yield ultimately to force. Repressions, arrests, house searches, dismissals, blackmail, the compulsory signature of a collaboration agreement— affected hundreds of thousands of people, but fear, together with hopelessness, made the remaining millions vote against their will and convictions, ruining permanently society’s ability of opposing the new system. To crush society morally created the necessary conditions to impose a world of appearances, characteristic of this system, where words, symbols and rituals lost their authentic content and meaning and became ornamental masks.⁶⁹³

Tadeusz Łepkowski shared her views when he remarked that

A citizen who is submitted by terror gradually (though relatively quickly) loses the honorable right to call himself a citizen and becomes the serf of the omnipresent and almighty (as he believes in his penetrating fear) power apparatus. (...) Uncontrolled fear rejects the opposition to evil that instills calm and (I would say) constructive courage, it degenerates humanity (...), produces passiveness and apathy, egoism and selfishness, a feeling of powerlessness and resignation, senselessness and the incapability of doing something sensible, it makes one agree with the unwanted (many times simply with evil), succumb to lies and co-participate in them (...), finally a complete social and moral accommodation [takes place].⁶⁹⁴

In her Conclusions for *Narodziny...*, Kersten resorted to the words of the back then Czech dissident and writer Václav Havel to highlight the deep moral damage that yielding and the lack of resistance causes within a group, in this case within Czech society since the Munich *Diktat* of 1938⁶⁹⁵. In another later text, already as President of the Czech Republic, Havel asked himself:

Didn’t the ‘less moral’ decisions have deeply adverse effects in the political sense as well? Didn’t the moral traumas resulting from these decisions have a profound and long-lasting political impact? We do not know what the consequences would have been of decisions to the contrary

⁶⁹² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 82, 105, 222-263; Kersten: *Jakta...*, 31, also Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 47-51; TURLEJSKA, Maria [pseud. Łukasz Socha]: “Skazani na śmierć i ich sędziowie (1944-1946)”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 13-14, 1983, 101-159; TURLEJSKA, Maria [pseud. Socha, Ł.]: *Te pokolenia żałobami czarne... Skazani na śmierć i ich sędziowie 1944-1954*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1986.

⁶⁹³ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 246, my transl.

⁶⁹⁴ Łepkowski: “O lęku...”, 15, my transl.

⁶⁹⁵ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 358-359.

—the more ‘moral’ ones. But we can well imagine that in the latter case the effects might not have been so deep, so long-lasting, or so fatal. There would most likely have been heavier immediate losses of both human life and property, and greater immediate physical suffering. But wouldn’t we have spared other losses, the less visible yet deeper and more permanent ones —the losses caused by the damage done to the moral integrity of our national community?⁶⁹⁶

According to Kersten’s works, in Poland’s case a reluctant society was eventually compelled to give up due to reasons one can deem understandable, but yielded in any event, and hence lost its dignity and *podmiotowość*. The 1947 elections became the first postwar example of *en masse* behavior against one’s own convictions and rights. Politics and elections acquired new, negative connotations and began to be perceived as a mere masquerade to legitimize *de facto* the law of the strongest. Dejection, apathy and fatalism spread among the Poles⁶⁹⁷. Far worse than material poverty, this defeat carried moral misery. Communist politicians managed to debase their own society and turn it into an ethical and spiritual *Lumpenproletariat* in the name of so-called proletarian revolution, so-called progress and Poland’s rebuilding after the War.

Despite Bronisław Geremek’s work *La potence ou la pitié* (1987) focused mainly on the feelings and attitudes towards poverty in Europe during the late Middle and early Modern Ages, it is inevitable to wonder, as Michel Sot did⁶⁹⁸, whether the Polish historian wasn’t also making a critical reference to the present situation, perhaps to his country’s recent past, when he asked himself if the price to pay for capitalism/ economic progress had to be so high (increase of poverty, change of official policies towards it, including much more indifference and repression, less charity and compassion), or when he concluded that, when values and human virtues (re-)emerged, any outrage committed against them was condemnable, because “historical necessity” cannot be a valid argument when individuals and groups have been divested of their natural rights:

La naissance de la société moderne s’accompagnait d’une brutale détérioration des relations humaines, qui constituait, selon les historiens en socio-économie, le prix social de l’essor du capitalisme. Fallait-il vraiment que ce prix fût si élevé? —il serait vain, de nos jours, d’essayer de trouver la réponse, ou de se demander dans quelle mesure ce prix se justifiait par rapport aux règles de l’éthique. Il est à noter, en revanche, que la politique sociale mise en oeuvre grâce aux ‘moyens des riches’, à l’aube de l’âge moderne, a été en général approuvée par les contemporains; peu de gens ont manifesté leur révolte face à une politique qui a préféré les potences et les prisons à la charité. Les sentiments et les valeurs les plus nobles, considérés comme les vertus suprêmes de l’humanité, apparaissent au grand jour et déterminent le comportement des collectivités seulement lorsque la réalité y consent. Et, à ce moment, sont aussi désavoués tous les actes qui ont porté atteinte à ces valeurs les plus précieuses, car même la nécessité historique ne saurait être une excuse là où les individus et les collectivités se trouvent dépouillés de leurs droits naturels.⁶⁹⁹

In the speech he delivered in Warsaw’s French Institute to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the French Catholic journal *Esprit* (late 1986), Geremek inspired himself —not surprisingly, regarding the subject of his historical researches— in a fragment of Benjamin Disraeli’s (1804-1881) political novel *Sybil* (1845). In the chosen passage, Egremont, one of the characters, speaks about two “nations” which live “together” but ignoring and disliking each other; they do not know anything about their respective habits, thoughts and feelings, and have different ways of life, formation and education,

⁶⁹⁶ HAVEL, Václav: “Catalonia International Prize. Barcelona, May 11, 1995”, in Havel: *The Art...*, 213.

⁶⁹⁷ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 261-263.

⁶⁹⁸ “Les pauvres aussi ont...”.

⁶⁹⁹ GEREMEK, Bronisław: *La potence ou la pitié. L’Europe et les pauvres du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Paris, Gallimard, 1997 (1987), 317, bold mine.

as if they were inhabitants of different planets. Geremek suggested the use of the same metaphor for Poland's present context; hence, the "two nations", which originally referred to the great socio-economic gap there was between the few, privileged rich and the poor, would allude in the Polish case to a political division (though it also involved an economic factor): that between the rulers and the ruled, *my* and *oni* (*us* and *them*), as they usually said in the country back then. The two groups had different behaviors, supported by divergent systems of values, plus felt mutual distrust and estrangement. They even spoke different languages. The problem about this was that the vast majority of Polish nation felt humiliated and under compulsion, having lost its rights as a "subject-agent". Since, according to Geremek, the "objectivization" of Polish society⁷⁰⁰ had taken place in the public sphere, to overcome this unfair situation the person-citizen, social groups and society in general must recover their political *podmiotowość* in the name of a sense of justice which is simply a moral imperative⁷⁰¹.

In the eyes of some critical *inteligenci*, in the 1970s and 1980s dignity and *podmiotowość* were beginning to be retrieved, especially since the formation of *Solidarność*. And, in the light of past experience, Poles should never allow those qualities to be taken away from them again. In this sense, Adam Michnik's article "Why You Are Not Signing" acted as a double reminder because, besides reminding himself and his imprisoned opposition colleagues the reasons for not collaborating with Communist authorities or signing a declaration of loyalty to PRL government despite repression, he also reminded his readers not to forget the outstanding behavior of those Poles who refused to give up. The best and most effective way to pay tribute to them and, simultaneously, to change things nowadays, was by following their steps. This was what he called "the argument of memory":

The history of your nation is fixed in your memory. You know that in its history a loyalty declaration signed in jail has always been a disgrace, loyalty to oneself and to the national tradition a virtue. You can remember those who were tortured and jailed for long years but who signed no declarations. And you know that you, too, will not sign them, because you are unable and unwilling to renounce the memory of the others, especially since there are certain people who keep on popping up in your memories: those who lost the battle for dignity in prison.⁷⁰²

For Michnik, to betray oneself in this way was not only tantamount to betraying or letting down fellow opposition colleagues: it also meant to betray and forget those who had sacrificed their lives before in the name of higher values and the freedom of future generations⁷⁰³. A "double crime" or, at least, something not to be proud of, that would draw those who yielded closer to the state of complete moral surrender the "winners" want the "defeated" to be in: "Every loyalty declaration is an evil; and a declaration that has been forced out of you is an evil which you were compelled to

⁷⁰⁰ That is, its transformation into a mere object. A process which, the author remarks, not only takes place in countries where a non-democratic State has the monopoly of the means of production, but also, to a certain extent, in Western countries.

⁷⁰¹ Geremek: "Dwa narody", 9.

⁷⁰² Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 8. See article in general 3-15.

⁷⁰³ In this sense, W.L. Webb pointed out that, in most of Michnik's essays collected in *Letters from Prison*, the names of relevant figures belonging to past generations of Polish history "... are interpolated in his arguments in a kind of litany or roll-call, as if he were calling them up to serve again with Solidarity or KOR (...). He has been in and out of prison like a figure on a political weather-vane for most of his adult life, and clearly these comradely ghosts have long been his familiars and comforters"; WEBB, W. L.: "A Polish realist. W.L Webb on the history lesson of Adam Michnik", *The Guardian*, 10-X-1986, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit, Adam Michnik's boxes).

commit, although it may, at times, be a lesser evil. So this act sometimes deserves understanding, always compassion, but never praise”⁷⁰⁴.

Therefore, present-day resistance and opposition were perceived as two-way redeeming actions if connected to past “defeats”. When danger and need were more severe, “a tiger’s leap into the past” is performed in search of something that could be brought back to the present. Present-day victims appropriated the claims for justice and other imponderables of former defeated, “skipping” the gap between life and death, but not just in the generation or affinity sense: “old” *niepokorni*⁷⁰⁵ can (so to speak) support mentally or technically “young” oppositionists because there is a stronger link of purpose and “destiny” between them, but they can also “redeem” all the people within society who had given up and had been forced to forget about their own rights, capacities and power, plus about past defeats and its victims. In other words, those who have been “defeated by life” in some way (yielded due to despair and fear, to spare their families’ lives or their own, deluded themselves or were already born and raised in that system and apathetic atmosphere) are given the opportunity to “inherit” the dignity, consistency and courage of the “defeated by death and subsequent oblivion”, that is, those whom only death managed to crush. The present-day redeemed, in turn, give meaning to the lives of past defeated and restore them to their deserved place in history, hence completing the double redemption process.

Krystyna Kersten considered that, except for Polish Communist rulers, every single Pole was defeated in the mid-forties. Back then, she argued, society was divided basically into two groups, regardless of their social origins and political commitments: on the one hand, people who believed that an engagement with the Communist government was definitely out of the question; on the other hand, those who thought that the only way they could make a difference in Polish state’s and nation’s fate was to participate in what was taking place. In both sides there were people with different views about social and economic change, democrats and supporters of an authoritarian people’s or national regime, traditional right-winged and leftists (among the latter: socialists and PSL backers). Thus, the point was which attitude would make Poland be better off bearing in mind the Red Army’s occupation of its territory and the recently-signed international treaties, how to protect Polish population, exhausted due to War and occupation, and at the same time ensure the conditions it needed to survive and to preserve its national cultural identity.

Kersten thought that politicians and citizens who were against an agreement with the Soviet Union were realistic in some way: with the Red Army’s and Communists’ dominion of Polish lands and government, respectively, to sign a declaration about Poland’s sovereignty was just an attempt to conceal from Polish and international society the revolutionary coup d’état Communists were carrying out with Stalin’s aid. They also foresaw Mikołajczyk’s failure in trying to reach an agreement with them. However, she pointed out, these “realists” who refused to negotiate from the start were defeated as well, and so were the ones who thought that only by admitting the Soviet Union’s and PPR’s supremacy there would be chances of developing social life in a country within USSR’s influence area. Thus, nothing could be done from any position in the face of Moscow’s unconditional dominion. That defeat was a burden in Polish

⁷⁰⁴ Michnik: “Why You Are Not Signing...”, 5.

⁷⁰⁵ *Niepokorni* is the Polish term for “unsubmissive” or “rebellious”. Its use among opposition groups became more frequent due to Bohdan Cywiński’s very popular work *Rodowody niepokornych* (1971 under censorship, unabridged in *drugi obieg* in 1984), which can be roughly translated as *The origins or The genealogies of the unsubmissive*. See Chapter 1 for more information.

political thought during the following thirty years, until a generation who hadn't lived these events first-hand entered public life⁷⁰⁶.

But Kersten also devoted some reflections to *them (oni)*, the Polish Communists and “winners of history”. She did so in the two versions of her Preface to the journalist Teresa Torańska's homonymous book (*Oni*), which consists of interviews to former senior officials of the Communist system who had fallen into disgrace, but still maintained their ideological convictions. Already in her first underground version under pseudonym, Kersten highlighted that these former leaders “divide schizophrenically the real world and the ideological world”⁷⁰⁷. This idea is the starting point of a comprehensive, albeit always critical approach to past Communist leaders on Kersten's part.

In her theoretical and methodological analysis of the interviews, she reflected on the nature of memory and knowledge, and on the blurry line dividing knowing and not knowing: self-deceit or self-justifying resources, suppression of memories, what somebody really knows about, but would rather not, what one doesn't know he/she knows or what someone thinks he/she knows but in fact doesn't... For a historian, who is aware of the reluctance of Communist ex-leaders when pressed and egged on by Torańska, the most important information that such privileged sources can give is provided in an unconscious, unintentional way.

Kersten tried to understand Polish Communists' way of thinking in the past and in the present by arguing they found themselves before two essentially different orders: the national one, which gave priority to Polish national interests, and the revolutionary supranational one, where national values were only taken on account if they fitted into the framework of the socialist advance that would lead to the liberation of humanity, and which was incarnated in the historical necessity of progress. In theory, the main goals for Polish Communists were the proletarian revolution and Socialism but, in practice, that boiled down to the Soviet Union's policies. The clash between these opposite value systems can be spotted in the interviewees' use of two linguistic registers, or even different languages: Polish and “Newspeak” (*nowomowa*), the latter being characteristic of all Sovietized Socialist regimes. It can be appreciated too through their contradictions and inconsistencies, such as the way they justified the establishment of PRL system back then (fulfillment of revolutionary ideals) and how they explain it now (out of need, as the lesser evil, had to take on account Soviet pressures...). To put it briefly, a Polish Communist patriot would be simultaneously, through a para-logical reasoning process, a Soviet patriot and, in consequence, he or she would treat the USSR's interests as a priority instead of Poland's⁷⁰⁸.

Polish Communists very rarely recognized that, to a great extent, and willingly or not, they were “the tools and executors of the Kremlin's political plans”. Nevertheless, Kersten perceived an authentic feeling of impotence and obligation within their statements and explanations, besides concealed fear⁷⁰⁹. So, in her effort to go deeply into the views and reasons of the “winners” (already “former winners” by the time the second Preface appeared), and thus understand better the mental and ideological training of a period which belonged to the past, she posed an empathetic question: “who were *them* for *them*?”. That is: if Polish society feared and simultaneously despised Communist *aparatchiks* and collaborators, who did *they*, in turn, fear and despise?

⁷⁰⁶ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 357-358.

⁷⁰⁷ KERSTEN, Krystyna [pseud. Jan Bujnowski]: “W oczach komunistów. Słowo wstępne”, TORAŃSKA, Teresa: *Oni*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Myśl, [1986], 5, my transl.

⁷⁰⁸ Kersten: “Kłopoty...”, 126.

⁷⁰⁹ Kersten: “W oczach...”, 12, my transl.

According to her, Polish Communists were twofold “accused” (*oskarżeni*): on the one hand, by all the people who opposed Communist system; on the other hand, by their own fellow-comrades once they fell into disgrace. Therefore, they lived under a double threat and pressure, because they secretly feared their own society and political opponents (Mikołajczyk, Polish government-in-exile...), but they probably feared even more the USSR and what Stalin or his successors could do to them⁷¹⁰.

Hence, Krystyna Kersten’s brief essays on Polish “winners of history” turn out to be, in a sense, an approach to a peculiar kind of “victims”, in the light of their morbid, schizophrenic behavior. Poland’s Communists were, above all, victims of their own delusion, ambition and lack of principles, which led them to be manipulated and exploited by foreign interests in Polish society’s detriment. But empathy has moral limits, and the author in no way tries to justify their wrongdoings, only to show the unhealthy results such behaviors brought about. Therefore, criminals and repressors should in any case answer for what they did and for what they supported, for all the victims they produced besides themselves.

Consequently, Kersten thought that the interviews in *Oni* are at bottom a moral trial: younger generations of Poles, such as Torańska’s, pick up the baton of the “defeated of history” and demand explanations about the possible pasts that miscarried:

The encounters of Teresa Torańska, a journalist who was born and raised in Poland under Communist power, with Communists belonging to the generation of her parents, and perhaps of her grand-parents, were not an ordinary contact between the Young and the Old, between the representatives of the incoming generations and people of the outgoing generations. There is in this encounter a considerable amount of tragedy, because the young woman who poses questions and demands the truth simultaneously accuses and calls to account. She calls her interviewees to account and demands them to testify, driven not only by her thirst of knowledge and truth, but also —maybe above all— by moral reasons. She personifies defeat, though she is the living proof that Polish society resisted, couldn’t be “rebuilt anew”, preserved its identity, with its great defects and wonderful virtues. And after forty years a considerable part [of Polish society] speaks critically about the role played by Communists, especially by those who were in power before 1956.⁷¹¹

Kersten’s previous words contain two other basic ideas present in her earlier historical reflections: firstly, the ultimate victory of the previously “defeated” Polish society; secondly, its diversity, which can never be given up, thus reinforcing her inclusive socio-political proposal for the future. That’s the reason why she argued in *Narodziny systemu władzy* that everybody lost in 1943-1948 but that, in the end, everybody won:

The second part of the sentence with which I began these last remarks is well-founded if we take a look at that new generation change —at *Solidarność*’s generation—: everyone won the struggle to preserve and develop Polish society in every field of its existence. Irrespective of the more or less favorable international conditions and the evolution of the Soviet system since 1956, different traditions, different patriotic models, antagonistic and at the same time complementary ideological and political frameworks must have been kept alive so that Poles could fully preserve their cultural identity. The problem of realism, as well as the reflection about imponderables, appear nowadays otherwise than in 1944 or 1945, the forms of commitment are different, as well as the controversies about the ways to fight. Everything takes place within a living community, rooted in history, in various social and idiosyncratic nuclei. However, the Poles of 1944 had to play, without being aware of it, different roles so that what happened [later] could take place. Almost every single one of these roles was indispensable for Poland to continue being Poland.⁷¹²

⁷¹⁰ Kersten: “Kłopoty...” and “W oczach...”.

⁷¹¹ Kersten: “Kłopoty...”, 123, my transl.

⁷¹² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 359, my transl.

Once again, we perceive in these comments the wish to overcome what are seen as obsolete divisions among the Poles and to work towards understanding and inclusiveness, because to accept and value diversity, to assume what happened in the past, especially at the beginning of the Communist period, and allow that wound to heal, is the basis of the democratic, balanced and conciliating system Poland should aspire to. This time, the collective defeats of the past should be transformed in an equally collective victory.

Similarly, we also spot the same idea regarding the inevitability of certain events from the Polish point of view. According to this, Poland's inhabitants were swept up by the current of history in the forties despite their multiple and varied attempts to avoid it (to fight, not to yield, to negotiate, to yield to diminish losses...). The moral that can be learnt seems to be that, sometimes, a people must endure defeat in the short term in order to have the chance of succeeding in the long run. As long as memory and the claims for justice are not completely lost, as long as some people put up a fight, a society can rise from its own ashes. The new attempt of younger generations gives a meaning to the defeats of the older.

B.3) PRL times and the prelude to massive social awakening

According to Tadeusz Łepkowski, all social classes in Poland collaborated to a certain degree with Communist authorities and institutions, and not just reluctantly, for the sake of survival or as the result of an inevitable daily co-existence and interaction. While Kersten rather focused on the moral defeat that such submission had entailed and presumed *bona fide* or, ultimately, fear and exhaustion in people's decisions, the former also considered other motivations in a more explicit manner, whether related to idealistic premises, selfish collective interests or individual profit. Blinded by these, many Poles ignored ethics and let themselves be persuaded by the rising powers, so that social debasement went even further.

On the one hand, peasants hoped to obtain lands, so part of them supported the government in spite of their fear of Bolshevism and the *sovkhoz-kolkhoz* organization of property that was predictably going to take place. Contrary to expectations, Łepkowski assured next that only a small percentage of the workers actually sided with the Communist regime, so its major backing came mostly from intellectuals, due to romantic leftist, positivistic, patriotic or self-seeking reasons. On the other hand, age played an important role in people's positions too, since the socialist revolution was carried out or aided by a quite significant part of the young, who wished career opportunities and adventure. They were soon organized in a national association and, full of faith and fanaticism, devoted all their efforts and sacrifices to the transformation of the country and the building of the new State. By the mid-1950s, however, some of them began to back off from official stances and attempted to change the regime from within (1956), while the rest remained as part of the apparatus and carried on with their careers. Thanks to all that constant or occasional assistance from Polish inhabitants, PRL's endeavors to "sovietize" society were more successful and efficient.

Starting from a state of complete material and social fabric destruction, to rebuild, restore, modernize, or universalize public services could only bring about considerable improvements in people's lives; however, all this went hand in hand with a drastic reduction of freedom, for authorities were aware that they didn't count with society's mandate. The government's central planning of economy aimed to organize and thoroughly control society, regarding it as a mere working force, while in factories

workers lacked motivations and limited themselves to fulfill the assigned task. Besides this, the Poles were constantly bombarded with Communist propaganda anywhere they went (streets, schools, army, trade unions, associations...) and through mass media, and the newly instated security services, together with their anonymous collaborators, made the development of pluralistic political life or the display of any kind of dissent a very risky job, especially in Stalinist times (1944-1956)⁷¹³.

Everyday life, thus, became in many aspects the prolongation of the moral surrender undergone in 1944-1947. Out of fear and compulsion, "the majority of society started to live a double life by clearly separating what it thought in private from what was said publicly"⁷¹⁴. In Bielecki's eyes, the Poles' "second life" was both a kind of social boycott against the government and, especially in economic matters (black market), a corrupted system where each person pursued his or her own interests, in many occasions out of need⁷¹⁵.

In any case, critical intellectuals soon looked out in the recent past for the features that, in their opinion, had made People's Republic of Poland differentiate itself from other surrounding socialist regimes along the decades. First, the country's pluralistic society had constantly opposed post-revolutionary and arbitrary governments, so that, slightly contradicting the previous idea of an absolute moral defeat, Łepkowski and others believed that some social resistance had actually remained behind or quickly appeared once more in the face of new events. Secondly, as a result of this, social revolts or crises broke out periodically, sometimes with a political content and with a view to alter the bases of Poland's systemic dependence on the USSR (1956, 1968), other times against socio-economic policies that worsened life standards (1970, 1976). Third, thanks to the strength and the moral and political prestige of the Catholic Church, Communist authorities had been compelled to make some concessions. Fourth, agriculture had avoided collectivization to a considerable extent and there also existed some space for the private sector in cities. Finally, due to social pressure as well, authorities had been forced to allow some political and cultural pluralism, though closely supervised (eg. through censorship) and with hardly any effective influence in decision making. Therefore, for *inteligencja* those distinctive features had more to do with social attitudes, positions and reactions than with voluntary governmental initiatives⁷¹⁶.

Nevertheless, beyond an action-opposition chain, PRL government's arrangements had also contributed to an increasingly adverse state of affairs for Communist rule because they created the conditions that restored part of its strength to society. The reconstruction of the country, the occupation of the new western territories or the 1950s intensive industrialization and urbanization favored national integration and solidarity links, so that Poles developed a community of destiny. Universal education, scientific development and a wide access to culture managed to change and broaden millions of people's views, though certainly steered, bureaucratized and restricted from above. In addition, the "national-Communist" creed related to national consciousness and society's faith in its own power which was taught at schools actually backfired on authorities more than once and became, as we will see, one of the main dialectic weapons of oppositionists from the mid-1970s, but especially since the irruption of *Solidarność* in the public sphere. That is, instead of uniting the majority of

⁷¹³ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 50-51.

⁷¹⁴ Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna...*, 585, my transl.

⁷¹⁵ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Wolność w obozie", in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 11-13.

⁷¹⁶ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 52; also MICHNIK, Adam: "A Year Has Passed", in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 125; Michnik: "Maggots and Angels", 188; Smolar: "Prosta i koło", 96.

society in favor of the Communist system, authorities eventually managed to unite it against themselves⁷¹⁷.

According to opposition narratives, as years went by, an *avant garde* of all social groups (but mainly intellectuals, students and workers) began to define themselves as an opposite or alternative pole to Communist authorities and were each time less and less willing to reach an agreement with them or yield to their pretensions. These initially modest proposals gathered momentum along the decades, its promoters reconsidered their goals and strategies, pooled them or went over their mistakes and misperceptions. For example, for Aleksander Smolar, the working class had been acquiring more and more consciousness of its own strength and the State's limits since December 1970 protests, which opened new spaces of freedom. Some years before, once Stalinism was over, part of the *inteligencja*, either individually or collectively, started to regain its intellectual, moral and even political role⁷¹⁸. Jan Józef Lipski saw the return of former Communists to critical stances in Christian ethical terms. As a founding member of KOR, he witnessed how many of them redeemed and "rejoined the flock", and did so with understanding: "... there was probably some shared memory of the joy of finding one's lost sheep; or that Peter denied Christ three times out of fear; or that Saul, the oppressor of Christians, was rightly forgiven when he came to join them; or that only those who are themselves without sin have the right to cast the first stone"⁷¹⁹.

However, Smolar esteemed that, if analyzed soberly, the socio-political initiatives created as a consequence of the 56, 68, 70 and 76 crises were isolated or few cases, for, in general, at least up until 1978 Polish society had had only a "negative" participation in public life, that is, it had only prevented or made more difficult the enforcement of laws or other measures, rather than taking an openly active role⁷²⁰. Nevertheless, already back then other more aware and committed attitudes were being encouraged in books and articles, as well as through activism.

The same year Smolar made the aforementioned appraisal, for instance, Czesław Bielecki noted that the idea or feeling that the Polish government no longer depended exclusively on the Communist Party, but also on the international context and the situation at home in the light of recent events (Helsinki Conference both in Finland's capital and Belgrade, Carter's policies, the appearance of opposition groups forcing an amnesty in 1977 and putting an end to the monopoly over information and culture) was rapidly spreading. There was an increasing consciousness about society being able to make a change. PRL apparatus had weakened because it could no longer carry out mass terror policies like in the first decade of its existence, so society had to try to profit from this and from its periodical crises. In his view, henceforward bloody revolts should be avoided; instead, the Poles needed to develop internal, organic work based on organized, constant pressure demanding reforms and pushing towards the fall of the regime. The Polish people had to be prepared to take up more responsibilities in decision making and force the government to really represent the nation and pursue society's goals and interests instead of the USSR's or its own⁷²¹.

In the second half of the 1970s, among former Communists, revisionists, neopositivists⁷²², left-winged or right-winged intellectuals, students, Catholic circles or

⁷¹⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 53.

⁷¹⁸ Smolar: "Prosta i koło", 96-97.

⁷¹⁹ Lipski: *KOR...*, 73.

⁷²⁰ Smolar: "Prosta i koło", 98-99; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 76.

⁷²¹ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Prowizorium", in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 3, 5.

⁷²² Neopositivism, which was embraced by many critical Catholic intellectuals in the late 1950s (the Znak group around Stanisław Stomma), implied a return to political realism after the previous period of idealism in the hope not just of improving the country's political conditions through negotiation with

workers, there appeared a series of groups with different socio-political programs and proposals. Their features varied in many senses: a great number of its participants had been already involved in previous critical initiatives (eg. October 1956, March 1968 at Warsaw University, protest letters, 1970 protests and riots...), while for others it was virtually the first time; some collectives were clearly opposition-like from the beginning or soon after (i.e. the government perceived them as a threat and persecuted them), others had existed for decades but approached opposition stances more decidedly since 1976, others differed from official views but were half-tolerated and yet others aimed to act as intermediaries between oppositionists and officialdom.

All of them were regarded by Jerzy Holzer as part of the mosaic that created a favorable social breeding ground for the formation of Solidarity, in a kind of snowball effect: the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR/ KSS "KOR"), the Student Committee of Solidarity (SKS), the Committee of Free Trade Unions of Upper Silesia or the Free Trade Unions of the Coast in Gdańsk (WZZ), the *Robotnik* magazine, Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe (PPN), the Flying University and the Society for Academic Courses (TKN), the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civic Rights (ROPCiO), the Young Poland Movement (RMP), the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN), the Movement of Free Democrats (RWD), the collaborating Znak (out of the *Sejm* since 1976) and Catholic *Inteligencja* Clubs (KIK), the Konwersatorium "Experience and Future" (DiP)..., though, in his opinion, some had had much more direct influence in the events that followed than others⁷²³.

In any case, they all had several important aspects in common: first, they believed that, in order to make changes in the system, social pressure had to be necessarily put on the government; in other words, Polish society had to regain its place and prominence in the public sphere and get involved as much as possible in the demands and the process of transformation. Secondly, in order for these ideas to reach as many people as possible, critical groups spread them through some kind of press organ, besides leaflets, mostly in *drugi obieg*⁷²⁴.

The foundation of the Workers' Defense Committee in 1976 was an important milestone in this sense because it implied either a change in or a deepening of *inteligencja*'s perception of the rest of society, both in theory and, most importantly, in practice. With their rapprochement to workers as a consequence of the repressive wave ensuing from June protests, KOR intellectuals started up a bottom-to-top initiative: they decided to focus primarily on the grassroots level (help people with money, legal or medical advice, finding them a job or moral support) and, only later on, aim for higher targets. Jan Józef Lipski explained it this way:

First, we fought simply so that the workers who were beaten, imprisoned, and dismissed from their jobs would not be abandoned and alone, and so that they and their families would be able to live a little more easily through the period of fury directed against them by the apparatus of violence. Later, we broadened our goals, singling out two at the very end of the road: democracy and independence.⁷²⁵

communist authorities and open participation in political life, but of an eventual attainment of power, evoking Roman Dmowski's strategy back in the early twentieth century. Adam Bromke perceives three elements that connect this recent rise of positivism with that of the 1870s: revulsion against military struggle as the aftermath of a crushing defeat (1863, Second World War, and the ensuing criticism against Warsaw Uprising), disappointment with the West and the reemergence of the German threat. Bromke: *Poland's Politics...*, 95-103, 232-251. See also Michnik's appraisal in "The New Evolutionism".

⁷²³ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 64-88.

⁷²⁴ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 83, 88.

⁷²⁵ Lipski: *KOR...*, 457.

KOR began, thus, by aiding the victims of Communism in their daily needs and defense of rights. An apparently humble task if compared to the ultimate wish of transforming PRL system. However, they helped to turn words into deeds and to “reconcile” two social strata that had acted separately and without the other’s support for decades. In addition, through the argument that every individual mattered, they contributed to restore the repressed workers’ dignity and to prevent their tragic experience from falling into oblivion:

This was a struggle with totalitarianism in its Bolshevik version, for which any individual life counted for nothing and could be sacrificed at any time to the Moloch⁷²⁶ of a so-called socialism, to the interests of the ruling class, party, or clique. KOR had no choice but to be different; here one could offer a sacrifice for oneself, when one believed that it was necessary and right, but never of anyone else, although this was never discussed in KOR and any discussion would have been considered inappropriate.⁷²⁷

The Workers’ Defense Committee was one of the first associations to spur Poles to organize themselves autonomously and from the basis, so that its creation was later seen (especially by its upholders) as a crucial step in Polish society’s process of empowerment and recovery of *podmiotowość*, which reached its zenith in 1980-1981.

There were, as well, other ways to promote this in a complementary fashion during the mid-1970s. For example, two well-known figures in the journalistic media with different ideological backgrounds, Stefan Bratkowski and Stefan Kisielewski, decided to put ordinary people at the center stage by telling their (hi)story or inciting them to know more about it. In Bratkowski’s opinion, empowerment had to take place too through the retrieval of people’s personal past, which he encouraged all his readers to discover and explore:

We have grown up believing that the right to a past is unevenly distributed in our society. That some families must have such past —those belonging to the upper strata of the old Poland—, and the rest have nothing to appeal to because their past is anonymous, fluid, it doesn’t belong to anybody, there is none. However, that belief stems from absurdly false premises; we have democratized present time (despite the efforts of some of our petty tyrants, we consider even them equal to the other citizens), but we have not carried out a social revolution towards the past.⁷²⁸

If after returning from that dive into the past such advice was also followed to the letter in the (supposedly democratized) present, it might very well suggest that each person, no matter who he or she is, can contribute to improve and change the course of events, that what he or she does is important and, therefore, worthy to preserve.

Hence, for Kisielewski, it was not just a question of recovering the past, full stop. The next step was to look out for and protect today’s stories, for they could become history in the future (see Chapter 4). In a context of economic crisis, great price increases and complete governmental indebtedness, *Tygodnik Powszechny*’s columnist actually agreed with Karl Marx’s idea of history: it didn’t have to describe the adventures of kings and grandees, but of ordinary people, their situations and material circumstances, to appreciate their class struggles. The history of society, he proceeded,

⁷²⁶ Semitic deity symbolizing destructive forces, especially fire, and to whom were offered human sacrifices. Coming from a mixed group of Catholic believers and non-believers that KOR was, it is revealing how the image of Moloch connects part of Polish opposition intellectuals’ stances with religion, specifically with Judaism, which, yet again, draws parallels with Benjamin’s Theses.

⁷²⁷ Lipski: *KOR...*, 7.

⁷²⁸ BRATKOWSKI, Stefan: “Prywatna przeszłość Polaków”, in Bratkowski: *Skąd...?*, 401-402, also 407, my transl.

was above all the history of economic relations and fluctuations, and of how the latter were reflected in behaviors, culture and mentalities (i.e. in the “superstructure”). Was such thesis only valid when it favored Communist rulers and not when, as in 1976, it turned against them by showing their blunders, failures and inconsistencies? Feeling like a chronicler or, as he said, like a “modern Kadłubek”⁷²⁹, Kisielewski believed that the hardships, disappointment and anger the Poles were experiencing needed to be told instead of being ignored and forgotten for the sake of Communist authorities’ convenience. In spite of censorship, he was trying to register and comment on what was really happening out on the streets, for he was persuaded that a country’s population was both the subject and the object of history⁷³⁰.

With that same conviction, Polish intellectuals approached next to what they perceived as Polish society’s “rebirth” *en masse*: the formation and development of Solidarity.

B.4) Polish society’s massive rebirth (1980-1989)

In Bronisław Geremek’s eyes, the general crisis experienced by Communist systems in the Eastern Bloc and the “awakening” of society to an active public life (“l’éveil de la population à une vie publique active”) converged in 1989 and are essential to understand the end of these regimes in Europe. He believed, thus, that the Round Table’s success was achieved to a great extent thanks to the involvement of society in the process and its support of a democratic change, though it demanded that the latter be bigger and quicker:

Le succès de la table ronde, tout comme la surprise tant de la direction soviétique que de la direction polonaise, ont été provoqués par la prise de parole des citoyens. Tandis que nous menions ces négociations, nous sentions que nous avions le plein appui de l’ensemble de la société polonaise, même lorsque celle-ci se plaignait que les choses traînaient, même lorsqu’elle était gagnée par le sentiment grandissant que nous pouvions obtenir plus et régler plus de choses encore.⁷³¹

Nonetheless, for the majority of intellectuals (including Geremek himself), this large-scale social awareness and *prise de parole* had taken place almost a decade before. *Solidarność* could be considered either its cause... or its consequence.

B.4.1) Solidarność’s legal period (August 1980-December 1981) and inteligencja’s proposals for Polish society

Opposition intellectuals’ interpretations as to what *Solidarność* was and how it came about were coincident or complementary in many ways.

For Holzer, its foundation had nothing to do with an anti-governmental conspiracy. It was simply a response to an exogenous pressure —that of PRL powers in the previous decade: “The history of the 70s made the society of Gdańsk’s Coast take a

⁷²⁹ Wincenty Kadłubek (ca. 1150-1223) was a bishop of Cracow and the author of *Historia Polonica*, a well-known chronicle of Polish history.

⁷³⁰ Kisielewski: “Historia będzie...”, 524-525.

⁷³¹ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 115.

strong dislike to the prevailing system and have a particular fighting spirit and radicalism, it shaped shipyard workers and their leaders”⁷³².

Lublin strikes⁷³³, which occurred hardly a month before August 1980's Gdańsk events, laid down an important direct precedent in Geremek's view. This was due to the fact that their form, level of organization and some of their programs and mottos transcended the usual material demands concerning bread and prices. A new quality had been forged: it was society's "first act of awareness" and, thus, the igniting spark of a different kind of opposition on an unparalleled scale⁷³⁴.

Along that Summer, the initially economic character of strikes and workers' demands went beyond and soon acquired a political and more global meaning, to the point that, in the talks that followed the occupation strike of Gdańsk Shipyards (starting in August 14th), the government decided to attend political claims first rather than salary or family subsidy increases, which would do nothing but worsen an already catastrophic economic situation. The former included the reinstatement of fired companions like Lech Wałęsa or Anna Walentynowicz, the building of a monument in memory of the victims of governmental repression in December 1970 and a security guarantee for striking workers. However, according to Holzer, just a few days later governmental representatives rejected any political postulate, including the creation of independent trade unions, but were willing to negotiate even the most demanding economic conditions⁷³⁵. From the author's narration, it can be deduced that Communist authorities realized only a little too late that these strikes had gone further than any other and that the political tune they had heard before almost exclusively in critical intellectual circles was now being played in factories too.

Louder and louder, that music spread around the country, was performed in different ways and yielded better or worse results, but it was yet again in Gdańsk where most was achieved and where Solidarity was founded. How was the latter perceived and described back in the 1980s?

Politically speaking, *Solidarność* was more than a workers' independent trade union for intellectuals. Tadeusz Łepkowski highlighted, in the first place, the few but significant anarcho-syndicalist snippets present in its ideas, form and strategies, especially at the beginning. For instance, strikes were considered an omnipotent force, had a political, anti-governmental nature and addressed not only workers, but society in general, using the opposition "State-society" typical of anarcho-syndicalism⁷³⁶. The self-governing character and territorial structure of the Union (divided in regions), plus its recurrent appeals to solidarity (hence its name), were indebted to this ideology too. However, due to the Church's influence and to the risk of being accused by PRL authorities of forming an anarchic, destructive movement that endangered the country's

⁷³² Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 96, my transl.

⁷³³ Lublin strikes or "Lublin July" were a series of workers' strikes that began on July 8th, 1980 in the State Aviation Works of Świdnik, close to the city of Lublin. In a few days, protests demanding lower food prices and higher wages spread to about 150 factories and enterprises with around 50.000 workers. Among their claims, they demanded the liquidation of privileges for the ruling class. To some extent, they heralded August 1980 strikes. DĄBROWSKI, Marcin: *Lubelski lipiec 1980*, Lublin, Zarząd Regionu Środkowowschodniego NSZZ Solidarność, 2000.

⁷³⁴ Geremek: "Wspomnienia Bronisława Geremka...", 1st and 4th page.

⁷³⁵ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 89-99.

⁷³⁶ See Chapter 1 for more on anarchism in connection with the figure of Edward Abramowski.

stability (which would justify its persecution and repression)⁷³⁷, *Solidarność* soon reduced its anarcho-syndicalist claims almost exclusively to the symbolic sphere⁷³⁸.

In the second place, Solidarity contained a great deal of pro-democratic and pro-autonomous elements. It carried out its activities openly, both in workplaces and the political arena, organized itself by means of free, democratic elections and many of its decisions were taken by a majority. The Union rejected violence, betted for understanding (“its words were extreme”, Łepkowski reckoned, “but its deeds and plans weren’t”) and wanted its negotiations with the government to be equally open. It represented moral and national renaissance, was idealistic (even partly utopic) and contained religious and humanistic-socialist components based on the concepts of truth, brotherhood and, yet again, solidarity. “It is clear to everyone”, this historian assured, “that the movement that began in Summer 1980 became a patriotic, national, democratic and pro-independence revolution fighting for the agency and independence of society-nation-State”⁷³⁹.

In the third place, both connoisseurs of Polish history and Polish opposition members alike dealt with the question about the revolutionary or non-revolutionary character of *Solidarność*. To Łepkowski’s mind, who agreed in defining it as such, a revolution was “an accelerated qualitative change in mentalities and the socio-political field (sometimes, though not necessarily, sudden and violent) carried out by a human group, and which, simultaneously, dragged the latter in a direction that was not always predicted or desired”. The indispensable ingredients for a revolution to break out were “a deep belief that a given situation is unbearable, that it’s unfair and hence morally intolerable. A spiritual, moral revolt against lack of freedom, against lies and hypocrisy, against the division into rulers and subjects, against abnormal normality, produces revolutionary stances. There cannot be a revolution without them”⁷⁴⁰.

Besides the most widespread idea of “self-limiting revolution”, Jacek Kuroń also described Solidarity as an “evolutionary revolution”. This view was shared by Timothy Garton Ash, who added some other concepts and adjectives, like *refolution* (reform + revolution) or “revolution of the soul” (*rewolucja duchowa*). In his work *The Polish Revolution* (1983), the British historian explained:

Solidarity was an attempt to make an evolutionary revolution. The specific question it posed was: can a self-organized society transform the political system of a state within the Soviet empire, by pressure from below, without violence?⁷⁴¹

One year after General Jaruzelski’s violent counter-revolution [December 13th, 1981] the short answer to this question appeared to be ‘no’. But the immediate aftermath is not the best vantage-point: the English Revolution ended with the Restoration, the French with Napoleon: only from a longer distance of time could the revolutionary scale of those events be measured. We do not yet have the necessary distance.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁷ Officialdom could also relate it to eighteenth-century Sarmatians’ “golden freedom”, which was very negatively regarded.

⁷³⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 59-60.

⁷³⁹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 60-62, my transl.; Geremek: *La rupture...*, 19.

⁷⁴⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 43 and 44 respectively, my transl.

⁷⁴¹ Jerzy Holzer also believed that what took place in 1980-1981 was a powerful, non-violent revolution of an unarmed society that challenged the armed power of a modern totalitarian State. Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 351-352.

⁷⁴² GARTON ASH, Timothy: *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, Yale University Press, 2002 (1993): 288, see in general 287-355; CRAWFORD, Keith: *East Central European politics today. From chaos to stability?*, Manchester/New York, Manchester University Press, 1996, esp. 54-79.

Up until August 1980, national revolution or renaissance had been a shared emotion (which, according to Törnquist Plewa, is the truth within the myth) that was expressed only through visual and verbal representations. It was understood as a past/frustrated past and a wish rather than as a present-time fact, or even something feasible. However, thanks to the achievements of striking workers and the ensuing foundation of Solidarity, this collective emotion was actually *experienced* by the majority of Polish society both first-hand and for the first time⁷⁴³. The way of expressing the myth had changed from a more passive, indirect and rationalized form to an active one, and, in a sense, so had many Poles' way of facing the Communist regime. What had so far just been seen, heard, read or thought about suddenly seemed to spring to life, boosting morale plus the general degree of awareness and involvement. People had the chance of playing the starring role now.

Still, it was not simply a one-way flow from the rational to the irrational: myths are in a state of constant flux. The emotional impact of having lived and witnessed *Solidarność's* legal period could not linger in the air alone for too long, it had to be put into words and images almost at once, which meant a partial rationalization of that new/not so new sentiment that, unlike before, had now been felt directly. This was done by two means: through the political actions of Solidarity itself (which required rational and realistic planning) and through the interpretation of events provided by intellectuals.

Despite its irrational nature, collective emotion was being steered in a wise and constructive way by Gdańsk strikers and, later, by the new independent trade union, according to Adam Michnik. It was possible to act critically and adapt to circumstances at the same time, so to live the myth and to behave realistically were not necessarily opposites. A "rational irrationality" implied the transformation of sheer emotions into realistic demands and political actions:

I think that [the wisdom and maturity of striking workers consists] of a skillful translation of everyday anguish into the language of socio-political postulates, and into a precise and realistic consideration of real possibilities. The list of demands of Gdańsk's Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee puts forward a fundamental change in the exercise of power, but all postulates remained behind the border delimited by the Soviet Union's political and military presence in this part of Europe.

Workers fought for the rights and interests of society as a whole. They fought for social rights and the rise of living standards, they fought for citizen rights and freedom of speech, for the right to agency and independent trade unions, for moral rights and the release of political prisoners.⁷⁴⁴

In Michnik's view, "each attempt to rule against society must lead to catastrophe" and, similarly, "each attempt to bring down Communist power in Poland means to attack Soviet interests. That's reality. One may not like it, but it needs to be taken on account"⁷⁴⁵. Poles couldn't aim for political transformation right away due to their country's geopolitical situation, but they could nevertheless walk towards independence and democracy by building a freer, fairer, stronger and better organized society. It was possible to demand pluralism and truthfulness in media and public life, the end of preventive censorship and police violence, a rational economic reform and fair social policies, freedom in scientific and academic areas, social control of prices, the creation of movements defending consumers' rights and independent justice courts. All of this should lead to a hybrid system combining a totalitarian State structure with democratic

⁷⁴³ Törnquist Plewa: *The Wheel...*, 13; Babiuch-Luxmoore: *Portrety i autoportrety...*, 55. See the Introduction for more.

⁷⁴⁴ MICHNIK, Adam: "Czas nadziei", in MICHNIK, Adam: *Szanse polskiej demokracji. Artykuły i eseje*. London, Aneks, 1984 (1980), 53, my transl. Also Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 96.

⁷⁴⁵ Michnik: "Czas nadziei", 56, my transl.

social institutions, even if it was provisional. Hard, patient negotiation and dialogue between the government and society was the only means to attain it⁷⁴⁶.

With the Gdańsk Agreements and the formation of Solidarity, it looked as if the message intellectuals had preached during years was finally reaching far beyond their scope and turning into broad-scale deeds⁷⁴⁷.

As to the social composition of August 1980 phenomenon, *inteligencja* had two ways of tackling it: in different strata (as when dealing with previous historical periods and decades) or altogether, like a unity (people, the Poles, society...).

In the first place, Tadeusz Łepkowski described *Solidarność* as a “young revolution”, both because it was being carried out by young people and because the freshness, impertinence, openness and sincerity of the latter had ended up “infecting” part of the older generations, rejuvenating them. This spoke against the traditional unfavorable image of youth as consumerist, easy-going and lacking ideas⁷⁴⁸.

In the second place, the movement’s existence was indebted to a groundwork dating back decades ago, i.e. to the sum of efforts and struggles of almost all social strata in Poland. With the difference that what had been mainly separate endeavors before, in 1976-1981 seemed to have joined or drawn closer together. As Michnik put it:

The Church’s opposition to atheistic policies, the villages’ resistance to collectivization, the intelligentsia’s defiance of censorship —all made up the ‘Polish syndrome’ that bore fruit in the form of the August strikes and Solidarity. The actions of the intellectual groups that organized aid to the participants of the June 1976 strikes played a special role. It was then that a common denominator for the activities of different social groups, especially the intelligentsia and the workers, was successfully created.⁷⁴⁹

In the third place, Solidarity was especially strong in industrial centers and big cities. Among the workers, the first to get involved were heavy industry’s. Among *inteligencja*, those devoted to creative activities. It then spread to workshop workers, and other *inteligenci*, then to peasants. Its impact was much more indirect in smaller towns⁷⁵⁰.

For Łepkowski, there actually existed two working classes: firstly, a modern, progressive, westernized and independent one, which had started and headed *Solidarność*’s revolution (highly qualified workers like those in shipyards, metallurgic factories, precision components and electronic industries); and secondly, a traditional, subordinated, “easternized” one, with a low level of awareness and knowledge, who spoke ill about Solidarity or eventually joined it full of reticence and fear (workers belonging to the textile, construction food and agrarian industries). The first needed free trade unions, while the second would content itself with slightly improving the existent, State-controlled ones.

As to intellectuals, the most committed were writers, artists (mainly from theater and cinema), scientists, workers of publishing houses, museums and libraries, some journalists and *publicyści* (though sometimes in an inconstant way, due to their status in the regime) and the most valuable teachers (unfortunately a minority). There were

⁷⁴⁶ Michnik: “Czas nadziei”, 56, 58; MICHNIK, Adam: “Nadzieja i zagrożenie”, in Michnik: *Szanse polskiej...*, 61; Lipski: *KOR...*, 76-77; Bielecki: “Umowa ...”, 39.

⁷⁴⁷ Michnik: “Czas nadziei”, 54.

⁷⁴⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 62-63.

⁷⁴⁹ Michnik: “A Year Has Passed”, 125, also Michnik: “Maggots and Angels”, 188; Howe: “The Polish Resistance”.

⁷⁵⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 61.

Catholics and non-Catholics alike; some had already backed different opposition groups since the second half of the 1970s, but between August and October 1980 many more joined in⁷⁵¹.

In Łepkowski's and Holzer's view, the basis of Solidarity had been the alliance between workers and intellectuals. This was, in many of the latter's eyes, a "traditional" link (1956) that had broken in some of the previous protests (1968, 1970) with a dramatic outcome. In 1976-1980, when *inteligencja* and workers' independent groups had acted separately (KOR helped repressed workers rather than collaborating with their own organizations), the influence of the former in the course of events had been indirect. And then, in the Coast of Gdańsk, there converged the ideal conditions for the union to take place again: a very vivid memory of the massacres perpetrated during 1970 strikes' (some of whose most popular leaders were still active); dynamic intellectual and student opposition groups, especially connected to KOR or the Young Poland Movement, and a relatively strong workers' opposition circle, organized as Free Trade Unions. Once the strikes were in full swing in August 1980, a few intellectuals made the first move and offered their help to workers in spite of governmental repression and attempts to avoid an inter-class understanding. Finally, a Commission of Experts was created to assist the Gdańsk's Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee. That is, intellectuals put their economic, sociological and political knowledge at the service of strikers, and inspired many important reforms and projects⁷⁵². The conclusion that could be drawn from such texts is that the collaboration between workers and intellectuals was an indispensable ingredient to change things due, in general, to the former's number and strength and to the latter's broader experience and know-how in negotiations and strategy design; that intellectuals seemed to be more eager and willing to approach workers than the other way round and that their wish was to provide guidance and counselling. In other words, it is *inteligencja*'s myth revisited.

However, the Catholic Church's social role in 1980-1981 events and before was not diminished either, even by non-believers. Actually, a left-winged intellectual like Michnik sought for inspiration in the Church as an independent institution co-existing with Communist authorities, in terms of negotiation of fields of action. At the same time, he acknowledged that it didn't only represent its own interests, but was "the spokesperson of the wishes of society as a whole"⁷⁵³. Since the beginning, Solidarity defined itself as moral and Christian due to the faith and hope it exuded, its spirit and philosophy, its rejection of violence and goal of social understanding. Conversely, the relations of independent trade unions with the Church regarding ideological and political-organizational matters were far more complex and there was mutual reticence at some points. While the Church was centuries-old, full of experience and independent from any other initiative, *Solidarność* was a young and inexperienced movement that could only do without the Church's support at a very heavy price. Therefore, there was certain dependence in that sense. In general, and especially before December 1981, the clergy was more radical and supported the Union more openly, while bishops and other Church hierarchy members behaved much more moderately, to the point that by the end of 1982 their stance regarding opposition movements was put into question by some, though this didn't entail a deep crisis⁷⁵⁴.

Finally, as to the peasants, on the whole they got involved in Solidarity's activities only later (demanding, for instance, independent agricultural cooperatives or democratic

⁷⁵¹ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 63-64.

⁷⁵² Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 64; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 94-101; also Geremek: *La rupture...*, 19.

⁷⁵³ Michnik: "Nadzieja i zagrożenie", 61, my transl.; Michnik: "Czas nadziei", 57-58.

⁷⁵⁴ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 65-66.

local council elections), and with considerable regional differences. Like in the working class, the most modern, richest and developed part of the countryside was usually the most engaged in independent initiatives. It was important to note, Łepkowski reminded, that a significant part of the middle and lower ranks in the Communist apparatus had peasant origins. In his opinion, a mass peasant movement against totalitarianism was impossible in present time but, given their mistrust of government, their contempt towards bureaucrats and their attachment to land, they also helped in the struggle against PRL⁷⁵⁵.

If the Poles supporting Solidarity were regarded as a whole, the first aspect that drew intellectuals' attention was its number. According to Łepkowski, while nineteenth-century uprisings were organized and carried out by scarcely 2-3 % of the population, now there was one million of active and conscious people belonging to or directly committed with the movement, then a couple of millions forming the circle of convinced supporters, though linked to it in a less direct way, and, lastly, around 8-9 million who backed *Solidarność* semi-actively, from time to time. In a country of about 35.5 million people, this would overall mean about one third of the population. So, he remarked, unlike in the previous century, 1980-1981 strikes and protests were a celebration that addressed and awoke a significant part of the nation⁷⁵⁶.

For Michnik, less visible contributions to oppose PRL system (whether by act or omission) should not be despised either, because the addition of small, daily deeds probably helped to change mentalities more effectively than anything else and created the necessary background for most ambitious initiatives to succeed:

This pressure [of people] has manifested itself (...) more frequently through silent, dogged, daily resistance. This resistance is exemplified, for instance, in the refusal to make a denunciation. It permeates the mental atmosphere of a good part of our intellectual life (...). All this is usually the work of people who do not sign protest letters or make spectacular gestures of opposition. But it is also thanks to them that we in Poland have been breathing a different spiritual air. This spiritual air —this tissue of culture and national consciousness that is growing daily, invisibly— is not simply the result of reading *Zapis* or *Biuletyn Informacyjny* or publishing in the Independent Publishing House (NOWa) but is the outcome of the totality of Polish accomplishments.⁷⁵⁷

Czesław Bielecki also believed that, besides its members and collaborators, opposition movements were based fundamentally on a much broader social conspiracy (*zmowa społeczna*). In his view, that element made a theory become actual massive practice and, in the Polish case, it “referred to the world of ideals enrooted in the nation’s history and the experience of families”⁷⁵⁸. Nevertheless, since *inteligenci* traditionally assigned themselves the task of defining values and the writing of national history, it looked as if everything departed from them after all...

Nowadays, Bielecki wrote, social conspiracy must adjust to circumstances and add more reflection and political theory to its formula in order to counterbalance traditional rash actions —something which reminds us of the arguments brandished by critical intellectuals in the idealism vs. realism debate (Chapter 1): “In Poland, courage, street protests, the ability to resist, is not the problem —we may add, it has not been a problem for two centuries—, even if they only were caresses against tanks. The problem is the nation’s degree of political consciousness and its transmission channels”⁷⁵⁹.

⁷⁵⁵ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 64-65.

⁷⁵⁶ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 61-62.

⁷⁵⁷ Michnik: “Maggots and Angels”, 188.

⁷⁵⁸ Bielecki: “Umowa ...”, 36-37, my transl.; similarly Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 63.

⁷⁵⁹ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: “Tak i nie”, in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 30, my transl.

Society needed to build its own democratic structures and moral sphere, taking advantage of the “dual life” situation it was forced to live in and exercising other less-practiced qualities, like “consistency, realism and patience”⁷⁶⁰. This way, when the international context changed and the right opportunity came round, the Poles’ parallel, “authentic” life would overcome the “false” one and an already free and democratized society would finally be able to build an equally democratic and independent State⁷⁶¹.

Similarly, education was regarded by many as fundamental for creating such public awareness. In particular, historical knowledge was, according to Kersten, the source of attachments and affections, but also of reason and wisdom, hence the insistence on the topic. Agency could be restored through the recovery of history⁷⁶².

In sum, now more than ever intellectuals’ target was to create and promote the idea of a united nation against the Communist regime (following the “us vs. them” or “society vs. State” logic), where everybody and every effort, no matter how humble, involuntary or even purposeless, counted, and where every governmental attempt to create discord among the Poles should fail. They believed that Solidarity had managed to join the majority of the population’s hopes, goals and endeavors and provided new opportunities for social collaboration that had to be steered towards more democracy, independence and education beyond governmental control. It expressed the rebirth of civil society and, therefore, the recovery of its lost *podmiotowość*⁷⁶³.

In spite of this, as time went by some left-winged opposition intellectuals apparently began to have second thoughts about society making its own decisions. According to David Ost, as people played an increasingly important role, Polish *inteligenci* started to notice the flaws of a completely democratic functioning in practice, in which populism, nationalism or too radical, hasty and unwise resolutions could ultimately frustrate Poland’s aspirations (i.e. opposition *inteligencja*’s) to a democratic liberal system. Thus, instead of imagining a community fighting altogether for freedom and democracy, along the 1980s this proposal changed and the community appeared as definitely guided by intellectuals. In other words, power should be handled carefully and responsibly by experienced people in order to avoid miscarriage⁷⁶⁴.

In our opinion, this tendency most probably increased since 1981, as Ost said, but could already be spotted before. At bottom, and whether leftists or rightists, intellectuals never ceased to see themselves at the lead or behind ongoing social changes.

⁷⁶⁰ Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 57.

⁷⁶¹ Bielecki: “Umowa ...”, 37; Bielecki, “Ciąg dalszy...”, 50; Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 53, 55.

⁷⁶² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 10; Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 58; for more on education, see Chapter 1.

⁷⁶³ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 19; “Wywiad profesora Geremka w *Il Manifesto*”, 4-I-1985, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9; Michnik: “Czas nadziei”, 57; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 134-152; Bielecki: “Umowa ...”, 37; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 62.

⁷⁶⁴ Ost: “Introduction”, 24. A few examples: MICHNIK, Adam: *Takie czasy... Rzecz o kompromisie*, London, Aneks, 1985, 43; MICHNIK, Adam: “Letter from the Gdańsk Prison, 1985”, in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, 89-91; KUROŃ, Jacek: “Nie do druku”, in KUROŃ, Jacek: *Opozycja. Pisma polityczne, 1969-1989*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo “Krytyki Politycznej”, 2010 (interviewed in February, 1981), 242-250.

B.4.2) December 1981: another defeat?

The frustrated projects of those who were crushed by history are alive in their failure as a possibility or a demand of justice. (...) Mere possibility brings to life a past that seemed concluded because its “absence” calls into question the legitimacy of what’s factual and simultaneously allows past injustice to be present as a demand of justice. Because the past could have been otherwise, what exists now must not be seen as fatality beyond repair. And if present time contains a latent possibility coming from a past that could not be, we can then imagine a future for the possible rather than for the given present.

Reyes Mate: *Medianoche en la historia*

“I hereby announce that today the Military Council of National Salvation⁷⁶⁵ was established (...) and it declared, today at midnight, martial law over the entire country”, rang the voice of Prime Minister and PZPR’s First Secretary, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, out of television sets at 6 a.m. on December 13th, 1981. Thus began the Martial Law period in Poland (December 13th, 1981-July 22nd, 1983), which entailed closed borders, the disconnection and ensuing tapping of telephone communications, the militarization of most prominent industries, curfew from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., curtailment of freedoms (inviolability of private homes and correspondence), the closing of some schools of various types and levels, a tighter censorship, the internment of thousands of oppositionists and dozens of killings.

From then on, a maimed and dwindled *Solidarność* would have to try to carry on in the underground.

What had taken to that situation? Was Solidarity’s “Carnival” definitely over?

Opposition *inteligencja* perceived two problematic sources prior to December 13th events: one coming from PRL authorities, the other from Solidarity members and upholders themselves.

On the one hand, Holzer pointed out that from the beginning of August 1980 strikes the government had strived to play them down and then carried out campaigns to discredit the whole initiative, something that didn’t come to halt with the Gdańsk Agreements and the formation of Solidarity. Hence, the fact that Communist power was ill-disposed to negotiate and yield at some points was sufficiently clear, even more so when its pro-reform nucleus lost the internal battle against the pro-Soviet one, by Summer 1981. On the other hand, in the year and three months previous to the coup *Solidarność* developed and experienced a radicalization, especially among grassroots activists. The Union’s power became overrated (even more so if bearing in mind their relatively low international impact) while Communist apparatus’ was underestimated, so that Solidarity’s representatives and National Commission were accused of being far too moderate in their aims and were egged on to put more pressure on the government⁷⁶⁶. Some intellectuals, like Geremek, already sensed back then that

⁷⁶⁵ The Military Council of National Salvation (Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego, WRON) was the military supra-constitutional organ formed to administer People’s Republic of Poland during the Martial Law period (December 13th, 1981-July 22nd, 1983). The acronym of this Junta in Polish is very similar to the word “crow” (*wrona*), which gave rise to all kinds of jokes and double-meaning allusions.

⁷⁶⁶ See Chapter 4 for more on the National Commission’s meetings and the drawing of historical parallels regarding power and responsibility.

authorities actually wished that the movement got carried away by extreme, demagogic, nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies, because that would provide them with an excellent pretext to ban it. According to Łepkowski, the government was planning from the start to dissolve the Union sooner or later and intensified the preparations since February 1981. Time was on its side: Solidarity was beginning to lose some support from ordinary people, the clashes between its leaders increased, as well as governmental provocations, and Polish society grew tired of daily economic difficulties⁷⁶⁷.

In the Conclusion to his 1984 work *Solidarność 1980-1981. Geneza i historia*, Jerzy Holzer ventured an early interpretation and assessment both of PRL government's and Solidarity's positions before the coup. In a sense, the nature of such analysis was "para-historical" because the author allowed himself to wonder whether there had been any alternatives for oppositionists or anything both sides could have done to avoid that tragic ending⁷⁶⁸.

In the first place, the Polish Communist regime was at a low ebb in 1980-1981. Unlike with previous protests and crises, on this occasion it hardly tried to interfere in the course of events. The Party had weakened and its cadres were discouraged; this was partly the indirect consequence of it losing a good deal of people's trust and of its growing reticence to carry out even minimal reforms.

In the second place, Polish society had never been so prepared to take part in the events ensuing from the workers' strikes; opposition groups existing since a few years ago played a fundamental role in this context. The new organized movement decided to demand and foster reforms without resorting to violence. In addition, given Poland's delicate dependent situation and bearing in mind the results of former national and international change attempts within the Communist Bloc, the promoters of Gdańsk shipyards' strike and Solidarity chose to self-limit their goals and forms of activity.

Once an agreement was reached, all sides of the conflict described it as an "engagement" (*Solidarność*, the Church, the government, the Communist Party...). For a considerable part of Polish society and its novel representatives, that engagement implied socio-economic and political transformations that would end up with Communists' monopoly in public life. However, governmental and Party authorities regarded it as something they had been forced to accept provisionally, until the right time came to return to the previous situation by regaining total dominion.

Could have Solidarity increased its chances of success, Holzer asked himself, by adopting a more moderate position when defining the permissible limits of the engagement or, on the contrary, by taking its adversary by surprise with a more radical behavior, and forcing it to make deeper transformations in the system? In his opinion, more moderation could have led to *Solidarność*'s self-destruction without attaining any of its ultimate objectives. Besides, everything that had been achieved at first was soon hampered by authorities and thus looked temporary and endangered. As a result, the less willing the government showed itself to carry out a minimum of reforms (delays and problems in registering Solidarity, police repression in Bydgoszcz, attacks against the Union...), the more radical and demanding Solidarity became (changes in justice courts, public prosecutors and the *Milicja*⁷⁶⁹, its own space in the media...). On the one hand, the Party and the government didn't want changes to be permanent; on the other, people supporting Solidarity mistrusted verbal promises and felt they had to ensure those changes by weakening its adversary and challenging it in all fields. For Holzer, along PRL times there had always existed the same action-reaction scheme: society responded

⁷⁶⁷ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 92-93, 268-271, 276-277; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 66-67.

⁷⁶⁸ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 351-355, also 302.

⁷⁶⁹ The *milicja obywatelska* (MO) was the State police institution during PRL times.

to governmental pressure. The road of moderation was blocked, so the only possible way was to go radical.

Radicalization, however, was not a wise option either, because in order to make changes irreversible it was necessary to weaken the inner forces that sustained Communist power (i.e. the army and the police). In doing so, Solidarity would have risked turning a bloodless revolution in a violent, armed war. Both the majority of society and the Church were against that so, in spite of increasingly radical activities, it was decided not to resort to physical confrontation. This was, to Holzer's mind, the result of society's ingrained aversion to a fratricidal war and of the fear both of provoking a clash between a disarmed crowd and the army/*Milicja* and of the internationalization of the conflict through the Soviet Union's intervention.

Therefore, oppositionists' and society's room for maneuver was minimal. It was true they had made many mistakes, but most divisions and conflicts had been due to personal and group rivalries rather than to clashing perspectives about the present and the future and, even regarded altogether, they only had a secondary influence in the course of events. Thus, besides specific variants, the general outline of Solidarity's revolution was defined by the international context, and in the face of such reality there were only two alternatives: capitulation or defeat.

Nevertheless, there never existed a real dilemma: a revolutionary process such as 1980's precisely involved the will of not surrendering in a voluntary way, even if it had entailed an apparently better state of things in the short term than a situation finally imposed by force. *Solidarność's* leaders and advisers —and, in fact, Polish society— no longer believed that something could be achieved that way, as 1956 and 1970 experiences had taught them. To yield would only mean a significant loss of support and power for the movement, its contribution to the worsening of the crisis, its manipulation by Communist powers and the calling into question of the idea of independent trade unions.

Taking all this into consideration, Holzer reckoned that the lack of freedom caused by physical imprisonment was preferable to capitulation, because the latter was tantamount to a "spiritual suicide". It would be as if somebody fastened a slipknot round his neck hoping it not to tighten itself. Most probably, it would alternatively strangle and slacken, as it had done in former presidents' Gomułka and Gierek times, turning finally into a kind of collar, the symbol of a humiliating submission. Society could only do well shortly, in the long term the system would break its will and ability to resist. It would debase Poland's national consciousness.

Despite approaching different historical periods, there are some clear parallels between Holzer's reflection and Krystyna Kersten's arguments. Firstly, within intellectual narratives in which the idea of losing weighs heavily (their works are ultimately a kind of chronicle and analysis of the Poles' loss of freedom and independence in recent times), they both tackle the difference between defeat and surrender, which they consider morally and spiritually vital for the nation/society⁷⁷⁰. Secondly, they tried to determine whether things could have turned out otherwise either in postwar⁷⁷¹ or in 1980-1981. The difference between their considerations lies precisely in the chosen context: in their view, whereas in the times of the Yalta Conference the turn to make a decision was overwhelmingly in Stalin's hands and the country was materially and mentally devastated, in the 1980s Polish society and oppositionists had a slightly broader field of action and hence decided to take the less harmful path to ensure a long-term survival. At the same time, these authors pointed out that many aspects and

⁷⁷⁰ Also, for instance, in Michnik's writings, as we have previously seen.

⁷⁷¹ For Kersten's case study, see Chapter 3.

resolutions were beyond non-Communist Poles' control since 1944, to the point that the unwillingness of the USSR and PZPR to negotiate became in both cases an insurmountable obstacle. Everything had been decided beforehand, and there was little to do. However, *how* it was done was simply crucial.

Therefore, Holzer apparently reached a deterministic conclusion: given the immovable stand of Communist power and opposition's reluctance to surrender, Polish society could only choose the "lesser evil" and Martial Law was implemented. This way, Solidarity's sixteen months of existence out in the open would turn into a lasting legacy, remaining in people's memory until they became a legend and instilled the necessary courage to carry on. With his work on the Union, this historian was certainly making his own contribution to the building of that heritage.

Many external and internal factors, Holzer acknowledged, would define Polish nation's fate, but sooner or later the awareness of society would be decisive and, in that sense, the Poles' destiny still depended, like in August 1980-December 1981, on themselves.

In the eyes of opposition intellectuals, the defeat caused by General Jaruzelski's coup was unlike others in recent national history: it might even not be considered as such. They argued that not only a quantitative, but especially a qualitative change had taken place in Polish society, and that it was irreversible. It was as if the lights had been turned on and, despite plunging back again into darkness, what was "seen" (and *felt*) for a more than a year could not be forgotten. What had only reached an embryonic state before (and was aborted many times) had finally become a "national rebirth".

Karol Modzelewski described *Solidarność*'s sixteen-month experience, plus the following two and a half years of Martial Law, as "surely the most important times"⁷⁷², and explained why:

The Union, like no other in history, was set up by a great mass of people with their own hands. It was fought out and won through strike, but even in those plants where there was no strike, people who joined the Union built its links and felt, perhaps for the first time, as the authors of something new in social life and they were never going to allow that authorship to be taken from them. Not just the first step, but the next —right until the end.⁷⁷³

The movement had made a crucial difference in the nation's degree of consciousness and involvement in public life. Before 1980, Michnik argued, the vast majority of Polish society was immersed in a "psychology of captivity": hatred and desperation were its main gears when demanding change and that just yielded poor, short-lived results and the use of blind violence. With the appearance of *Solidarność*, however, the Poles "again felt themselves to be a civic and national community", "they forged their solidarity and discovered their strength"⁷⁷⁴. The flavor of freedom would certainly be hard to forget, as well as the feeling that the course of history was no longer exclusively in PRL government's hands, as Władysław Bartoszewski believed:

Within the limits of what was possible, we wanted to co-run our working places by ourselves. Our youth experienced for the first time what freedom could be like, they tasted the Polish Summer. In spite of the brutal violence, that taste remained in the memory of students and workers alike. All social groups felt solidary towards each other for the first time. This is the novelty that became engraved in social memory and will multiply in the future. For, in the long run, neither

⁷⁷² "Na pewno czas najważniejszy —rozmowa z Karolem Modzelewskim", *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 26, 149, my transl.

⁷⁷³ "Na pewno czas najważniejszy...", 133, my transl. It should be noted that pages are misplaced in this edition of *Krytyka*, so that 133 is where 123 should be.

⁷⁷⁴ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 50-51.

[Communist] Party workers nor generals can push a nation of 36 million people into internal emigration or resignation. The limits of what is possible must be permanently discerned anew, but no one can define them now —they are changing. History cannot be predicted —I know this as a historian. I had time to think about it. And dreaming is still allowed, isn't it? Even in a country deprived of freedom.⁷⁷⁵

Martial Law times were, nevertheless, times of uncertainty, and that lack of definition could eventually cause social paralysis, as Jan Józef Lipski pictured:

... no one today can come up with a distinct perspective and a program of action. The state of suspension between 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' continues. 'Today' is still an elusive state of affairs, sometimes felt to be more than temporary, a kind of pseudo-existence.

In the long term this is a dangerous state of affairs, felt less by those who continue to be active through underground struggle than by the rest of society.⁷⁷⁶

Some of his colleagues, however, were again ready to provide some guidelines about what should be done to avoid this. For Michnik, what was needed was to carry on with the self-determination process (not give up an independent civil life), politics of activism (requiring determination and patience), the Catholic Church's contribution to teach moral values, human and national dignity, but without interfering in politics or discriminating; national solidarity (respect pluralism and other nations), socialism (representing traditional values of social freedom and justice) and freedom (assuming its risks in a responsible and mature way)⁷⁷⁷.

Sometimes they also resorted to historical examples. Drawing parallels between the Martial Law period and the Second World War was especially popular:

[If you sign the declaration of loyalty to PRL government] The steel gates of Białoleka [prison] will open up before you, and instead of the prison yards you will see the streets of your hometown, filled with strolling army patrols and rolling tanks. You will see people being asked for identification cards, cars being stopped to have their trunks inspected, the security agent, with his keen eye, fishing out of the crowds individuals suspected of 'violating the state of war legislation'. You will hear World War II terms that until now you knew only from history books: 'roundup', 'Volkliste' — words cleansed of the dignifying patina of time and pulsing with new menace. You will hear about new arrests, about people sought by the police or in hiding, about Draconian sentences.⁷⁷⁸

December 1981 military coup was seen as a war declaration against the Polish people. The ways to defend against that attack had to do with the deepening of self-governing activities (as recommended by Stefan Bratkowski, who provided different past foreign instances) and the building of political maturity through careful planning, efficient organization and distribution of tasks involving as many people as possible, and everyday work instead of living off abstract ideals. In sum, rather than following World War II's model of an underground, militarized State, it was necessary to develop an "underground society", in Czesław Bielecki's words. Oppositionists gone into hiding after PRL's round-ups should rely on more horizontal networks of "collaborators"

⁷⁷⁵ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 7, my transl. Also Michnik: "Polska Wojna", 11; Bielecki, "Nasza wielka...", 42.

⁷⁷⁶ Lipski: *KOR...*, 464.

⁷⁷⁷ Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel", 326-329.

⁷⁷⁸ Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 3.

(ordinary people) not just to do better, but in order not to eventually lose the Poles' support and commitment⁷⁷⁹.

All efforts would be worthwhile if it all boiled down, as Michnik, Bielecki and others maintained, to a struggle between authenticity and falseness in Polish life. If Communist authorities had perceived the Union as such a threat to them, then its members and supporters must have done something right:

You ask me whether I believe that it is sensible to maintain a political underground. Before I answer this question, let me ask you a question: Do you believe that Solidarity was an event of historic significance, or merely an unimportant episode in Poland's history? Was it a coincidence of events, a unique deformation of the historic process, or the natural, institutionally permanent embodiment of the aspirations of the Polish people? If it was a mere episode, then we can expect the ruling communists to wipe out its traces—and not only of the walls of the cities. But if it was an authentic movement of national rebirth, then no one will manage to replace it with artificial creations, such as the Committees of National Rebirth, that are being founded throughout the country on the orders of the army commissars. If it was authentic, then the communists' scheme is pathetically unrealistic, and even the most energetic activity on the part of WRONa's people—those armed with guns as well as those armed with bugging devices—will fail to exterminate Solidarity.⁷⁸⁰

Was December 13th the consequence of extreme aspirations or of the system's own nature? I think that the inevitable cause of the conflict between Communist powers and *Solidarność* was the authenticity of the movement. In a society that, besides the Church, was built upon appearances, there suddenly appeared something that showed the grim truth of our social life, and thus had to be destroyed or exchanged for something resembling it only nominally.⁷⁸¹

The revolutionary process headed by Solidarity had been violently interrupted. It had lost but it had not been vanquished because, in the meantime, Polish society had recovered its agency, rising from its postwar ashes. And, as Giełżyński reminded, this kind of lost revolutions brought about the most favorable and lasting effects⁷⁸². Such ideas were also expressed by opposition circles through different images, like the following⁷⁸³.

Despite *Solidarność* was “cut down” by PRL government, as the next poster shows (Figure 6), repression didn't manage to kill its spirit; only that, after December 13th 1981, it was forced to grow underground, in secrecy. However, it pushed its way into the open again with new shoots. It seemed that, out of a single, powerful tree, many more buds could sprout to resume the pending issues concerning Polish society's rights and freedoms.

⁷⁷⁹ Bielecki: “Nasza wielka...”, “Ciąg dalszy...”, “21 uwag o dialogu z terrorystą” and “Program...”, all in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 46-48, 51-52, 57 and 62-76, respectively; Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 53-54; Bratkowski: *Co zrobić...?*, 96-120, esp. 98-99.

⁷⁸⁰ Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 41-42.

⁷⁸¹ Bielecki, “Nasza wielka...”, 43, my transl. Similarly in “Interview with former Solidarity adviser Bronisław Geremek” (B-wire reporting Geremek's interview in Rome daily *Il Tempo*, 12-IV-1983), 12-IV-1983, HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9.

⁷⁸² Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 68; Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 154.

⁷⁸³ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

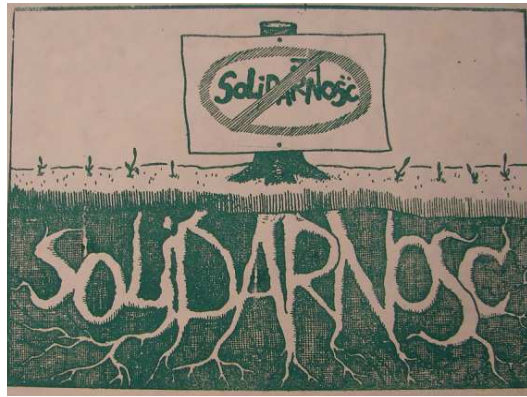


Figure 6

The use of the tree as a metaphor is significant in several ways: firstly, it links to nature's cycle, to the idea of renovation and Springtime ("Springtime is ours, Winter is yours", their motto went: *Wiosna nasza, zima wasza*)⁷⁸⁴. Secondly, it alludes implicitly to the origins of the *Solidarność*-tree: the seed, loaded with frustrated pasts, that had to wait for the right moment to sprout and that, before its early "death", had left behind other seeds and strong roots that also waited their turn to grow. Bartoszewski also perceived it this way and actually made use of the same metaphor:

When we went to Mass or prayed together in the [internment] camp⁷⁸⁵, when we prayed alone, we thought not only of our friends, wives and families. We thought about our humiliated society, about our Polish nation. And about the Pope, who was always close to us. We never lost our courage. We fought for a just cause. We knew that young people would resume this fight. If not today's youth, the next generation will. The soil is prepared. The seed that has been sown by millions of people is going to grow and provide a rich crop.⁷⁸⁶

Thirdly, roots refer to origins and identity too, and, at the same time, to all that goes on "below the earth", that is, underground (*w podziemiu*), without being noticed. After repression and illegalization, "authentic" social life was displaced almost exclusively to the clandestine sphere, but never ceased to flourish, as Jan Józef Lipski pointed out:

The state of war crushed the numerically impressive but still rather loosely organized open structures of Solidarity. It paralyzed all free social life in the country. The authors of the December coup were unable, however, to destroy the underground. Hundreds of printed underground periodicals, many editions of books, and often effective economic strikes, and so on—all constitute a spectacular indication of the strength and the extent of resistance. The new government trade unions still represent a minority, and even they are not loyal beyond question. But the period of demonstrations and massive strikes is over. New demonstrations still occur often, but they are not as large and impressive as before. The masses, loyal to Solidarity in the majority, are not ready today for great actions, and do not believe in their effectiveness. For them, it is a time of waiting, and a time of persistent underground work for particularly determined groups. One might say that as things stand now it looks as if KOR—and the democratic opposition in general—had multiplied thousandfold.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸⁴ In connection to this, see also Figures 9 and 10 further down.

⁷⁸⁵ Bartoszewski was interned after December 13th coup.

⁷⁸⁶ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 7, my transl.

⁷⁸⁷ Lipski: *KOR...*, 463-464.



Figure 7

The poster shown in Figure 7 also insisted on the multiplying effect of critical movements and attitudes the Martial Law had caused. Not only did it not kill *Solidarność*, but, as the saying goes, it made it stronger:

Just as the ideas of Solidarity are still alive in Poland, so also the real effects of the impulse that gave birth to KOR eight years ago are luckily still with us, and they have been strengthened despite the December catastrophe. Those who were fully active in the movement in defense of human and civil rights and in the fight for free trade unions numbered only a few hundred people, yet today there are tens of thousands, and behind these, millions more. This can be a source of cautious optimism.⁷⁸⁸

Inteligencja had to keep hopes alive. It was one of its fundamental duties in moments of hardship.

B.4.3) Epilogue: the triumph of 1989

As the 1980s dragged on, the international changes that intellectuals expected finally arrived (US' and UK's pressure, Gorbachev's measures...), and it looked as if, despite the Martial Law setback, most of Polish society was willing to profit from the opportunity and push things further. In Summer 1986, PRL government announced an amnesty and shortly afterwards Lech Wałęsa established *Solidarność*'s Provisional Council out in the open. In 1987, John Paul II visited the country for the third time and the wave of protests and strikes in Spring-Summer 1988 forced Communist authorities to propose a meeting with the opposition. More than five months and many preliminaries later, that suggestion gave way to the Round Table talks (February-April 1989), where government representatives officially recognized *Solidarność* and agreed to its participation in the following half-free elections in June.

The posters designed to promote Solidarity's candidatures in the election campaign insisted on, and hence summarized, the images that intellectuals had developed in their writings about Polish society's collective rebirth, Springtime renovation and the "return" of past defeated⁷⁸⁹.

⁷⁸⁸ Lipski: *KOR...*, 465.

⁷⁸⁹ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.



Figure 8

Figure 8, for instance, depicted in a very particular way a typical landscape of Polish Mazovia region formed by a special kind of knobby willow trees (*wierzba*). In principle, this could convey fertility, renewal or nature's cycle, like the posters of Figures 9 and 10 do. But not only: these “trees” are actually hands and arms bursting through the earth, which may evoke the return from death. The branches sprouting from the trunk remind of thin jets of blood gushing forth, or veins and arteries turning into branches, giving new life beyond the body. Their red color connects with Solidarity's logo, as if echoing the gift of a new life provided by a previous sacrifice. The dead and defeated of the national community come forth and nourish present-day aspirations⁷⁹⁰. We do not know the exact date when the poster was designed, but it also suggests a vote by a show of hands: the roots of Polishness supporting an opposition movement that is acting once again out in the open.



Figure 9

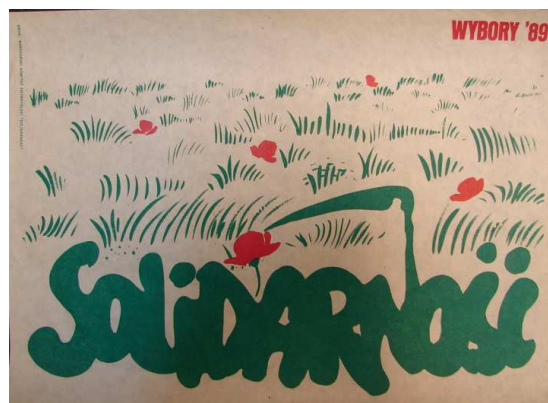


Figure 10

In June 1989, Solidarity won ninety-nine of the hundred seats in the Senate and 35% of the seats in the Sejm, the maximum it could aim for. Change was unstoppable now.

⁷⁹⁰ An anonymous poem titled “Droga krzyżowa” fused the Catholic notion of resurrection with Springtime renovation. It was published in the *drugi obieg* magazine *Solidarność Narodu*, 1, 22/II/1982, 1-2.

Chapter 3

The meaning of Poland's existence between Russia and the West. The re-edition of old debates and the question of (co-)responsibility

The collective identity of a given group is formed by two different and closely-related aspects influencing each other: the group's idiosyncrasy (i.e. what its members consider their own) and its relation with different groups, that is, with what its members consider alien. As Lipski put it, "a fatherland can only exist when foreign lands also exist; there is no 'our own' if there is no 'foreign'. The shape of patriotism", the author believed, "depends more on the relation with what is 'foreign' than with what is 'our own'".⁷⁹¹

The relations of Poland with neighboring or close-by countries have had many peaks and valleys along history, especially in the last three centuries. Opposition intellectual circles within our time scope usually tried to diminish the feelings of resentment and mistrust towards other nations while promoting friendship and understanding.

For instance, in the mid-1970s two outstanding *émigré* oppositionists, Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski, supported in the journal *Kultura* that Poland's independence from the Soviet Union would be favored if Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus (ULB), back then republics of the USSR, also recovered their sovereignty⁷⁹². The most recent grudges against these three countries had to do with the shift of borders after the Second World War, which moved westwards, so that Poland lost a broad strip of lands in the east, but gained others on the western side in detriment of Germany. Among the eastern territories, the Poles especially lamented the loss of two cities which had been considered a fundamental part of Poland and Polishness: Lwów (Ukraine's Lviv) and Wilno (Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania). Regarding this point, and in close connection to their reluctance to recover past political ideologies (Chapter 1), most intellectuals insisted in wiping the slate clean and not questioning the new territorial reconfiguration.

Besides Jan Józef Lipski's general review of the relations with each neighboring country and beyond in *Dwie ojczyzny...* (Germany, Russia, ULB, Czechoslovakia, Western nations), other Polish underground publishing initiatives stimulated dialogue and the exchange of views between oppositionists from different Eastern Bloc countries, including Hungary, Romania or Yugoslavia. For example, since its first appearance in 1978, some articles or sections of *Krytyka* (which had Hungarian and Czech members in its editorial board) were almost always devoted to the thought and works of foreign dissidents, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Václav Havel or György Konrád, and, by the 1980s, more specialized periodicals such as *ABC. Adriatyk, Bałtyk, Morze Czarne, Nowa Koalicja, Obóz, Biuletyn Informacyjny Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej* or *Zona* were issued⁷⁹³. A few books and monographic numbers on

⁷⁹¹ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 36, my transl.

⁷⁹² MIEROSZEWSKI, Juliusz: "Rosyjski 'kompleks polski' i obszar ULB", *Kultura*, 9, 1974. A closer analysis of the publication in SNYDER, Timothy: *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003, 217-231.

⁷⁹³ All were written in Polish, but *Nowa Koalicja* has excerpts and abstracts in English. Most of the numbers these periodicals, including *Krytyka*, can be checked online thanks to Encyklopedia Solidarności's virtual reading hall of underground publications (Wirtualna Czytelnia Bibuły): http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=WCB_Strona_g%C5%82%C3%B3wna (accessed on August 27th, 2014).

Polish-ULB and Polish-German relations were also published along those years⁷⁹⁴. Apart from this, many other intellectuals dealt with or referred to such relations more or less directly, frequently or in depth in their essays and speeches.

Leaving Germany aside, the two countries that contributed most to shape the ways of being and the attitudes of the Poles and their *inteligencja* were Russia-the USSR and the West—which, of course, is not a single state or nation, but is very frequently regarded as an abstract whole in Polish discourses, covering at least Western European countries and, sometimes, also the U.S. or North America. The “East” and the “West” according to the Poles, thus, will be the topic of the present chapter.

A) *Russia and the Soviet Union*

It is undeniable that Poland’s relations with its Russian neighbor have been turbulent for centuries, though this does not mean that Russian influence was always rejected on principle, and even less rejected by everybody or by a majority.

The dictatorial form of the Polish state between 1947-1989 was harmful, irksome and worrying enough alone, especially for those who relied on freedom of speech to earn their livelihood, but the fact that it was fostered by and dependent on the Soviet Union lent completely different connotations to the situation, given Poland’s partitioned past, the Polish-Soviet War⁷⁹⁵ and the Katyń massacre⁷⁹⁶, just to mention the most outstanding and traumatic landmarks engraved in the country’s collective memory.

For the Poles, who, unlike Czechs or Bulgarians, did not cherish pan-Slavic feelings, the origins of the PRL system were as clear as day: the penetration in Polish territory in the 1940s of the Soviet army, which had never left since then; or, in other words, the aggression of a foreign power, so that, from then on, Poland was forced to respect the USSR’s interests in spite of its own⁷⁹⁷. Making use of the Second World War and Nazi occupation experiences, Polish official media insisted in pointing out Western Germany as the country’s main threat, whereas the Soviet Union’s friendship and protection would provide security against it: “it’s about proving, through the manipulation of history, that the Russian problem had ceased to exist (the USSR guarantees the lasting independence of Poland), while the menace on Germany’s side is still actual”. However, Łepkowski assured, “in reality the Russian (USSR) issue stood in the foreground. Already in the nineteenth century it was evident that the main front for the uprising struggle was the Russian front. The second half of the nineteenth

⁷⁹⁴ SKARADZIŃSKI, Bohdan [pseud. Kazimierz Podlaski]: *Bracia nasi? Rzecz o Białorusinach, Litwinach i Ukraińcach*, [no city], Wydawnictwo Słowo, 1984 (2nd edition, corrected and completed: *Białorusini, Litwini, Ukraińcy. Nasi wrogowie —czy bracia?*); MOKRY, Włodzimierz: *Polacy-Ukraińcy. Dziś-wczoraj-jutro*, Warszawa, Warszawa WiS wyd. we współpracy z Komitetem Kultury Niezależnej, 1986; *Argumenty do dialogu polsko-białoruskiego. Zeszyt 1*, Warszawa, Przedświt, 1986; WÓYCICKI, Kazimierz: *Czy bać się Niemców?*, Warszawa, CDN, 1990. Secondary literature on the topic: SNYDER, Timothy: “Memory of sovereignty and sovereignty over memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999”, in MÜLLER, Jan-Werner (ed.): *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 39-58.

⁷⁹⁵ An underground booklet dealing with this: ZUŁOWSKI, Mieczysław: *Wojna z Rosją o niepodległość, Łódź*, Wydawnictwo NZS UL “Kaktus”, 1981.

⁷⁹⁶ An open letter of Polish intellectuals and oppositionists asking dissident Russian *intelligentsia* to raise its voice concerning Katyń wood murders: “Do rosyjskich intelektualistów” *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 242, 9-III-1988, 1 and 4; Tadeusz Jandziszak’s words during the KPN trial contained similar demands. Tadeusz Jandziszak’s speech in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 28.

⁷⁹⁷ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 9, 48-49.

century fully confirmed this. Each ‘slackening’ in the Soviet bloc diminishes our dependence”⁷⁹⁸.

Therefore, the “curse” of half-sovereign states and protectorates did not only belong to Polish past, it was part of the present too. So it was suggested by Czesław Bielecki when he drew a parallel between the Grand Duke of Russia Constantine Pavlovich (1779-1831), commander-in-chief of the forces of Congress Poland, and general Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923-2014), the PRL prime minister responsible for the establishment of the Martial Law: “and so HOW to fight against Russia and its Grand Duke Jaruzelski?”, he asked his readers⁷⁹⁹. Both he and Łepkowski considered that Poland’s “protector” had always feared the country’s independent spirit and its democratic traditions and aspirations:

... the most important reason why the Russians have refrained from an invasion is their historical knowledge about our attachment to imponderables, their certainty about our resistance (...). Hence, besides the economic consequences of an invasion, of taking charge of the maintenance of a nation of 35 million, it is mainly us what discourages them, not Carter, Reagan or the conference of Madrid 1980.

The Polish complex of Russians is not only based on their memory of uprisings, but also on the lesson of Afghanistan, and thus on the conviction that a Soviet soldier will surely enter Poland, but it is not certain whether he will get out alive. The fear towards Poland has an ambivalent character. By tolerating the ‘Polish syndrome’ there is the risk of tainting with freedom the Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus and the Baltic republics. By ‘normalizing’ Poland Russia becomes tainted with the help of its own pacification forces. The masters of the Soviet empire realize that ‘panska Poltsa’ can be the beginning of the end of their colonial expansion. Already today nothing portends peace in Vietnam, Angola and Afghanistan, so it will be worse for Russians if there arrives one more, this time white, mutinous colony.⁸⁰⁰

Besides the fact that colonial theories concerning Russian dominion over Poland popped up from time to time in some oppositionists’ narratives⁸⁰¹, the main point of Bielecki’s argument was that, far from being helped from abroad, the Poles were somehow being aided *from the past*. According to CDN’s chief editor, the Black Legend of fearlessness and ethical rebelliousness that their ancestors managed to knit up over decades, suffering bloodshed after bloodshed, had “clotted into” a kind of magical, invisible, protective psychological “barrier” around Poland, so that invaders would think twice before making a too risky and irreversible move. This was, at least, what many critical and unsatisfied Poles were prone to believe as part of their process of empowerment, especially before December 1981. And, indirectly, *inteligenci* told their readers what Poland was like in contrast to their Russian neighbor (freedom-submission) or, more precisely, how Polish inhabitants would like to be... and be perceived.

But the principle of national self-definition could awaken less positive nationalist feelings within the countries revolving against the Soviet Union, Leszek Kołakowski warned. Anti-Communism or anti-Bolshevism could be ousted fairly easily by anti-Russian notions in oppressed societies⁸⁰². But where did Communism-Bolshevism or the previous tsarist regime end and where did Russianness begin? For some left-winged intellectuals, this turned out to be a crucial, albeit complicated distinction in their

⁷⁹⁸ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 21-22, quotation from 22, my transl.

⁷⁹⁹ BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: “21 uwag o dialogu z terrorystą”, in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 55, capital letters in the original, my transl.; also Moczulski in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 30.

⁸⁰⁰ Bielecki: “Umowa ...”, 39, my transl.; also Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 13.

⁸⁰¹ Another example: Jerzy Holzer considered that Poland was a half-colonial protectorate in the postwar expansionist plans of the Soviet empire; Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 11.

⁸⁰² Kołakowski: “Świadomość narodowa...”, 27-29.

dissertations. If the Russian nation and the Russian regime were not the same thing, were they simply divergent? Or were they different, but inseparable?

Other oppositionists, on the contrary, did not bother so much in spotting the differences between them because they deemed them a consequent whole. Bielecki's comment about Bolshevism being the offspring of centuries of corruption and enslavement, or, in other words, of the weaknesses of the Russian nation, is very significant in this respect⁸⁰³. Impotence, primitivism, chaos and irresponsibility were typical Russian features, according to him, whilst in KPN's magazine *Gazeta polska* hopelessness, passivity, loss of individuality and of one's truth, existential disintegration, constriction of the soul and, in sum, the defeat of man by force were added⁸⁰⁴.

These characteristics were the result of Russia's position between Europe and Asia⁸⁰⁵. "For some centuries", Jerzy Holzer wrote, "Rus' was submitted to Asia, and when it got rid of its dependence, it turned towards Asia of its own accord. Its Eurasian character made it grow completely away from its neighboring European countries in the shape of Moscow, later Russia". And, later still, the Soviet Union, which was the heir of Eastern Christian-Byzantine traditions, but also of "an Orient which is further away from Europe in geographic and civilization terms"⁸⁰⁶. Wojciech Skrodzki was even more explicit in *Gazeta polska* when he connected Russian forms of government to the Chinese Empire and the Mongol Khanates, which, in his view, were based on the maintenance of the system by force⁸⁰⁷.

Jan Józef Lipski, on his part, tracked down the origins of these "oriental" interpretations back to Romantic times and strived to remind the Poles about the excellence and Europeanness of Russian culture and principles:

Since very long ago, since Romanticism, there are conceptions in Polish ideology according to which Russian culture was twofold —and negatively— conditioned by the crossing of Byzantine and Mongol-Tartar (Turanian) influences. Lately one can spot in the press and other uncensored publications a very rapid success of Feliks Koneczny's conceptions in this respect⁸⁰⁸. To put it briefly, the result of this Byzantine-Turanian crossing is a culture in which there is an evident submission of the individual to a hierarchic power, collectivism dominates over the person, and the

⁸⁰³ Bielecki: "Program...", 69; full quote in Chapter 2.

⁸⁰⁴ Bielecki: "Program...", 70-71; Or. [unknown pseud.]: "Kiedy Polak przegrywa duszę?" *Gazeta Polska. Pismo Konfederacji Polski Niepodległej*, 3(34), 18-II-1988, 3.

⁸⁰⁵ An image developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, sometimes dealing only with Russia, as in Poland's case, sometimes covering all Eastern Europe, which was pictured as the homeland of backwardness and barbarianism, a "compare and contrast" resort to highlight Western Europe's importance and advances. WOLNIEWICZ, Marcin: "'Russian Barbarism' in the Propaganda of the Polish January Uprising (1863-1864)", *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 107, 2013, 129-164; WOLFF, Larry: *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994.

⁸⁰⁶ HOLZER, Jerzy: "Europa Środkowa. Przeszłość- Teraźniejszość -Przyszłość", in Holzer *et al.*: *Myśli o naszej...*, 5 and 7 respectively, my transl.; also Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 26; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan: "Głos z drugiej Europy", in KISIELEWSKI, Stefan: *Bez cenzury*, Warszawa, CDN, 1983, 135. On Russian artists' and intellectuals' interest in the Asian facet of Russian identity since the late 19th century, and the Russian democrats' own explanation of tsarist despotism and the Soviet Union in terms of Asian character, see chapter 6 of Figes: *El baile...*, 435-517.

⁸⁰⁷ SKRODZKI, Wojciech: "O Rosji metafizyczne, nie geopolitycznie", *Gazeta Polska. Pismo Konfederacji Polski Niepodległej*, 1(49), 14-I-1989, 2.

⁸⁰⁸ Feliks Koneczny (1862-1949) was a Polish historian and journalist specialized in Central and Eastern Europe. Between 1919 and 1929 he taught at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. In his theory of civilizations, he classified the actually existing civilizations in seven types, according to their attitudes to law and ethics. The four dating back to ancient times were "Brahmin", "Jewish", "Chinese" and "Turanian"; the remaining three were medieval: Latin, Byzantine and Arab.

ethics of the horde over individual ethics. As it usually happens with such generalizations, there is some truth in it and at the same time too much does not correspond to the truth. The traditions of Moscovian despotism surely have something genetic coming from the model of Chinese power, and the position and role of the Tsar and his court certainly followed the Byzantine model in a conscious way.

But against these traditions there is another tradition in Russia, the tradition of spiritual independence, starting from knyaz Kurbski⁸⁰⁹ or earlier: a tradition of dissent and of search of ideological bases in the West. The Russia of Decembrists, Herzen⁸¹⁰, Bezkishin⁸¹¹ and other participants of the January Uprising, of Zemlia i Volia⁸¹², of the *narodniks*⁸¹³—that is not Byzantine-Turanian Russia. In our times, the Russians coined not long ago the word *samizdat*, which we frequently use today; they were the first, they showed us the way at a very high cost, and the committee of the great Sakharov⁸¹⁴ is an inspiration and an example for us. In Russia it is additionally difficult, and more courage is needed.⁸¹⁵

Therefore, without denying the existence of a two-faced reality in Russia, Lipski encouraged his compatriots to make a difference between the country's Western European values or democratic traditions, like Orthodox Christianity and the Decembrists', and those which had nothing to do with it, that is, tsarist and Bolshevik regimes⁸¹⁶.

In Adam Michnik's opinion, the hybrid nature of Russia whipped up an equally schizophrenic feeling in Polish thought since the late eighteenth century. The long-lasting quandary "to befriend, or to mistrust?" had been clearly stated, according to him, in the works of the poet Adam Mickiewicz:

Partitions and uprisings, repression and conspiracies—here are the sources of Polish reflections on Russia. The community deprived of its own state and civil freedoms, the submitted and 'russified' nation defended its identity by building a cultural barrier and creating a civil catechism that rendered useless Russian attempts to transform Poland into the 'Privislinksy kraj'⁸¹⁷. This catechism had to solve as well a fundamental dilemma: what was the character of the conflict between the Poles and Russia? Was it part of the conflict between two nations, of which one was the bulwark of Western civilization, and the other the incarnation of Asian barbarianism, or was it also part of the universal struggle for freedom against despotism? If it was a civilizational dispute, then the enemy of Poland would be the whole of the Russian nation, for each Russian, regardless

⁸⁰⁹ Prince Andrey Kurbsky (1528-1583) was a Russian military commander and nobleman. Close friend of Ivan the Terrible in the beginning, he became one of his most firm opponents after his defection and emigration to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Among other things, Kurbsky denounced the tsar's absolutist tendencies in his personal correspondence with him (1564-1579).

⁸¹⁰ Alexandr Ivanovich Herzen (1812-1870) was a famous Russian socialist thinker, writer and revolutionary-democratic political activist. He founded, together with other companions, the clandestine revolutionary organization Zemlia i Volia (Land and Liberty, first phase: 1861-1864). He was regarded as a traitor for supporting the Polish January Uprising of 1863.

⁸¹¹ Matviei Bezkishkin was an officer that defected from the Russian army (1863) and became a commander of the Polish January Uprising rebels. He was captured and hanged in the Tsar's punitive expedition.

⁸¹² Similarly as in the first phase, the second Zemlia i Volia (1876-1879) wanted to spread socialist revolutionary ideas among Russian peasantry.

⁸¹³ Narodniks, also known as populists, were middle or upper-class Russian revolutionaries who wanted to spread socialism in rural areas in the 1860s and 1870s. Some of its members became involved in revolutionary agitation against the Tsardom.

⁸¹⁴ Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989), Soviet nuclear scientist, dissident and human rights activist awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.

⁸¹⁵ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 50-51, my transl., also 52.

⁸¹⁶ Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 30; also Billington: *El icono...*, 388-389 and Figes: *El baile...*, 188-190.

⁸¹⁷ The Vistula Land or Vistula country, one of the semi-official names given to the Russian part of Polish lands (officially known as Królestwo Polskie or Congress Poland), symbolized the increasing lack of autonomy of the latter after the January Uprising (1863).

of his or her personal choices, is condemned to participate in the steppe-Byzantine civilization and the barbarian conquest. If it was, on the other hand, a conflict between the spirit of freedom and despotism, then the natural ally in the Polish war against tsarist Empire would be the Russian democratic movement.

Adam Mickiewicz—all of us following his lead— provided an ambiguous answer. Or rather a double one. The first answer was the message “Do przyjaciół Moskali” [“To the Muscovite friends”, C.A.], the second—the image of the Russian state, both in the pages of *Dziady* [Forefathers’ Eve, C.A.]. As if in the pages of his work Rylejew fought with Nowosilcow, and Pushkin with himself. Nowosilcow won Rylejew, and Pushkin—the author of the verses *Oszczercom Rosji* [To the slanderers of Russia, C.A.] won Pushkin—the friend of Decembrists. Also in people’s general awareness Mickiewicz—the friend of Muscovites was defeated by Mickiewicz—the relentless writer who unmasked Russian despotism and Russian submission to autocracy.⁸¹⁸

Thus, in Michnik’s view, the national issue had prevailed over the idea of a common struggle for freedom and rights:

The Poles—following Mickiewicz— ceased to believe in a Russian democracy after the defeat of the Decembrists. They based their reasoning on the conviction that Russia was somehow condemned—by its tradition—to perpetual slavery; so it was thought by Słowacki and Krasiński,⁸¹⁹ Mochnicki and Klaczko⁸²⁰. Of course, specific individuals were respected; the Decembrists and Lermontov⁸²¹, Herzen and Granovsky⁸²². However, they were seen as *voices in the night*, flowers growing in a rocky ground, noble flowers among the dark night of Russian autocracy. These formulae degenerated into resentment and complexes, fitting characteristics for a submitted community resisting a policy of denationalization. The pressure of Tsar Nicholas’ *tsinovniks*⁸²³ produced an utter resistance: the national catechism demanded the next generation of Poles to fight unconditionally against the Russian element. Also in the cultural sphere.⁸²⁴

However, following in Mickiewicz’s footsteps, the mission of Polish intellectuals in PRL times was to remind about the ancient struggle for freedom taking place in Russia⁸²⁵. Reviewing Wiktor Woroszyński’s⁸²⁶ biography of Alexandr Pushkin⁸²⁷, Michnik considered there were few Polish writers who, like the former, were capable of

⁸¹⁸ MICHNIK, Adam: “Adam Mickiewicz —my wszyscy z niego”, *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 22, 1987, 167-168, my transl.

⁸¹⁹ The poet Zygmunt Krasiński (1812-1859) was considered, together with Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, one of the “three bards” of Polish Romanticism.

⁸²⁰ Julian Klaczko (1825-1906) was a Polish writer, translator, pro-independence political activist and politician of Jewish origin. He cooperated with the group of liberal noble Polish émigrés “Hôtel Lambert”. Klaczko had a more positive view of the Austro-Hungarian rule over Poland than of Prussia’s or Russia’s due to its more tolerant policies towards Polish inhabitants. In the 1870s he worked for Vienna’s Foreign Affairs Ministry and became member of the Galician Parliament, later of the Reichsrat.

⁸²¹ Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) was, together with Alexandr Pushkin, the most famous writer and poet of Russian Romanticism. He founded the tradition of the Russian psychological novel and also devoted himself to painting.

⁸²² Timofey Granovsky (1813-1855), the historian who founded medieval studies in the Russian Empire, supported the superiority of Western European culture and history. His lectures at Moscow University on these topics became very popular and influential, especially among other Westernizers.

⁸²³ The tsarist Empire’s bureaucrats.

⁸²⁴ Michnik: “Adam Mickiewicz...”, 168, italics in the original, my transl.

⁸²⁵ Michnik: “Adam Mickiewicz...”, 176.

⁸²⁶ Wiktor Woroszyński (1927-1996) was a Polish poet, writer and translator especially devoted to Russian culture. Very active supporter of Communism in the first decade of the PRL, he later became a dissident and was involved in opposition initiatives, like KOR, the uncensored journal *Zapis* (of which he was chief editor in 1977-1978) or TKN, besides signing many letters of protest. He was arrested on December 13th 1981 and spent almost a year in prison.

⁸²⁷ WOROSZYŃSKI, Wiktor: *Kto zabił Puszkina* [Who murdered Pushkin], Warszawa, Iskry, 1983.

writing about Russia without falling into servility or, on the other extreme, into hatred. Despite this, Russia is one of the key Polish topics, and the ignorance about it only made Poles defenseless and unwise. As Lipski frequently reminded, critical writers and intellectuals must understand and make others understand that their Russian equivalents lived in even worse conditions than they did, both in the tsarist Empire and in the Soviet Union. In sum, the Russians were the intellectually and spiritually captive people *par excellence*, and some of them challenged the moral nastiness of their own system:

Russia's literary life is the continuous conflict of the verse against denunciation and of the poet against the informer. The history of the great Russian literature is the history of confiscated works and of writings deformed by the censor's pencil, it's the history of tortured and morally broken writers, imprisoned and put into lunatic asylums, murdered and committing suicide. The spiritual history of Russia is the history of a people in a cage. I do not know any book in which there is such a descriptive tale about this cage than Wiktor Woroszyński's. The denunciation is one of the most popular literary genres of the cage. (...) By quoting denunciations and police reports, Woroszyński takes us into a world which is closed to simple mortals: the reader follows his guide with an increasing blush, similar to that which must appear in a monk's face visiting a brothel. It is nevertheless a highly instructive trip: it allows one to understand the nature of the conflict of the *tsinovníks* with literature, of the spirit of the lackeys with the spirit of freedom.⁸²⁸

Michnik, as Woroszyński, wished to pay tribute to the unsubmissive intellectual Russia from Pushkin's times onwards; to Dostoyevsky and Gogol, to Mikhail Lermontov, Aleksandr Poleżajew⁸²⁹ and Lev Tolstoy, to Vladimir Mayakowski, Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, among many others with whom he wanted to form a brotherhood against the "other Russia"⁸³⁰. To put it another way, the image of the nation-victim, the ethos of the "defeated" and the repressed, with which the Poles felt so identified, could actually pave the road towards mutual understanding with the Russians.

While those devoted to politics or political negotiations, like *Solidarność*'s leader Lech Wałęsa, should certainly follow the premises of *Realpolitik*, move around with cautiousness and always take into consideration who controlled *de facto* the Soviet Union, the task assigned to opposition *inteligencja* was of a different kind. Its members should raise their voices against the injustices and crimes taking place beyond their eastern borders; they should fight against negative nationalist stereotypes in a humanistic and conciliatory way. Politicians had to solve specific problems in specific circumstances, intellectuals took care of much broader, timeless questions:

Just like Wałęsa's silence is understandable, my silence concerning the persecution of Sakharov would imply betraying what I consider the sense of my life. This sense consists of an unconditional faithfulness to Mickiewicz's tradition, which demands to link the love towards national freedom to a fraternal gesture directed to the Muscovite friends; which demands to remain faithful to Russian friends not when they walk in the glory of victory —for what's the merit of being on the side of the victorious?— but when, especially when, they are imprisoned and persecuted, thrown out of their own fatherland and pushed into inexistence by the reality of great politics, which reduce human rights, our civil sacrament, to 'humanitarian questions'. To remain

⁸²⁸ MICHNIK, Adam: "Puszkina i Rosjanin". *Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny*, 16, 1983, 239. Very similar comments in a Letter to Russian intellectuals in opposition written by Michnik and the film director Andrzej Wajda: "Szczerość za szczerość. List otwarty do Dymitra Lichaczowa i Nikołaja Samweliana i innych rosyjskich ludzi kultury", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 26-III-1989, 5. A different view on the bad influence for the Poles of Russian *intelligentsia*'s internal conflicts and their subsequent attitudes: Or.: "Kiedy Polak...?", 3.

⁸²⁹ Russian romantic poet (1804-1838) in the line of Decembrist poets. Due to the writing of a satirical poem he was forced to join the army and was sent to the Caucasus.

⁸³⁰ Michnik: "Puszkina...", 242; very similar in Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 86-87.

faithful against history and sociology, when Katkov⁸³¹ wins Herzen, when black-hundredist ideas⁸³² try to be inoculated to Poles and Russians, when nothing forebodes changes, when even the West has forgotten about Herzen because it seems a waste of time to get to know a defeated emigrant. Have we remained faithful to that message? (...)

... the intellectual must defend the values that have been trampled on just for the sake of those values. He must know that these values rarely enjoy victorious times, but above all he must know that no victory is definitive. In this sense, he must be an eternal Don Quixote, the knight of the causes which are being continuously defeated, but which are nevertheless worth defending. It is absolutely possible —the idea of Polish-Russian reconciliation, of free people with free people, of equal people with equal people, is one of the hallucinations of Polish naïve idealism. However, the intellectual must defend this hallucination —also against reality, also if its costs isolation and loss of popularity. Also if it costs him persecutions. But not at the cost of truth.

The intellectual must understand reality. He must understand its inner tensions. He must comprehend that latent values usually have a controversial character: defending one, we reject another. That's why the duty of intellectuals is not to repeat a homily of reconciliation, but to penetrate into reality and discover its snares. He must then reject the interpretation of Polish-Russian relations in terms of 'Slavic dispute' and Christian bulwark. He must track down mystifications and obstinately go back to difficult issues, propose a language free of lies and a reflection free of phobias, hence a talk without diplomacy and stereotypical banalities.⁸³³

Therefore, in Michnik's eyes, the mission entrusted to *intelligenci* consisted in going beyond stereotypes and in challenging harmful, nationalist fallacies —while fueling their own, positive intellectual myth.

In this spirit, Michnik was perfectly aware too that Russians logically pursued their own national interests and welfare, not the Poles'. So he made the effort of being in their shoes, though without justifying what he considered unprincipled actions. Taking Alexandr Pushkin as an example, the author argued:

He could loathe despotism, censorship, secret agents and betrayers, he could support the pro-freedom Decembrist movement heartily, he could write that he had had enough of the 'Saintly Rus'', he could dream for years about travelling abroad and make all kind of efforts to do so, but he couldn't wish the fall of the Russian empire.

This position was (and probably is) usual among Russians, such a crack is nothing strange. How many Poles during the II Republic supported the creation of a Ukrainian state? Just a few individuals. And Poland was not a despotically ruled country... (...) To wish the defeat and the lessening of one's own state is very difficult indeed, even when one is aware of the fact that it is not the ideal state. Such a position requires a great civil courage and a great spiritual strength that only a few possess.⁸³⁴

To approach the Russian question with a more understanding and empathetic will involved soul-searching on the Polish side too. Tadeusz Łepkowski and Jan Józef Lipski observed that while the hatred, mistrust and fear felt by the Poles towards their powerful eastern and western neighbors mingled, in the German case, with a complex of inferiority, in the Russian case feelings of superiority and disdain took the lead. It was as if Poland assigned itself "the mission of conveying the heritage of the developed West to the backward East. Probably even more", Łepkowski hinted, "if we sense, *sotto*

⁸³¹ Mikhail Katkov (1818-1887) was an influential conservative Russian journalist in Alexander III's times. From 1863 until 1887 he was the chief editor of the newspaper *Moscow News*. He energetically opposed to the Poles' national aspirations.

⁸³² The Black Hundreds was an ultra-nationalist Russian movement in the early twentieth century which staunchly supported autocracy and the Romanov dynasty.

⁸³³ Michnik: "Adam Mickiewicz...", 181-182, my transl.

⁸³⁴ Michnik: "Puszkina...", 243-244, my transl., also MICHNIK, Adam: "1863: Poland in Russian Eyes", in Michnik: *Letters from Prison*..., 249-274.

voce, that our 'Westernness' is by no means complete"⁸³⁵. To doubt about the value of Russian culture and attempt to pour scorn on it was both offensive and senseless for Lipski:

To feel culturally superior in the face of a nation that has given birth to Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, not to mention dozens of writers who could proudly represent all of European literature; in the face of the nation of [the medieval painter Andrei] Rublev and Mendeleyev and Stravinsky —is most surely a complete misunderstanding. It is the nation that created byliny⁸³⁶ and great Orthodox paintings when we still had a very poor national literature and our own painting had hardly begun.

No Polish writer has had so much influence in Western literature, that West which we want to belong to, as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov. Nothing proves either that the spiritual culture of Polish peasantry was richer than the Russian. They are simply different. There is something grotesque and regrettable in the megalomaniac feeling of superiority of some Poles over the Russians.⁸³⁷

According to Polish oppositionists, hostility should be thoroughly avoided not only in the name of transcendental ethical reasons, but also due to present-day practical motivations. By the mid- and late 1980s it became increasingly clear that the transformations taking place in the Soviet Union, stimulated either by official spheres with the arrival of Gorbachev, by society or by unofficial critical circles, could bring about very important changes for the rest of the countries of the Eastern Bloc. To look for answers together and co-operate with each other was the single way out:

Each Pole must understand today that our traditional phobias and megalomania towards surrounding nations are suicidal for two reasons: moral and political. (...) ... the political reason tells us that either we manage to free ourselves from the threat of death and disintegration all together, the nations of the USSR and the nations dependent on the USSR —or none will.⁸³⁸

Therefore, the Poles should keep an equilibrium based on taking a stand against submission to the Soviet Union (their own and others') and, at the same time, not falling into hatred. Such a balanced position would enable Poland to become a kind of intermediary or "bridge" between Eastern and Western Europe⁸³⁹.

The images of Russia were certainly complex and manifold in Polish intellectuals' thought. Up to now we have seen how some of them focused on the country's hybrid Eurasian nature or on the perverse reciprocity of Bolshevism and Russianness; others were determined to set Russian cultural heritage apart from the pulse of violence and despotism of its rulers. Some preferred to talk about Russian complexes; others tried to understand the attachment to one's fatherland and discovered through an introspective analysis that, actually, Russians and Poles shared similar defects and tendencies (nationalism, democratic movements against despotism, inferiority complexes...). Some tried to avoid simplifications while claiming the ethical superiority of universal issues over national(ist) quests in spite of *Realpolitik*; many were seeking international rapprochements and collaboration to overcome the forty year-old division of Europe. But we have seen none of them demanding accountability... until now.

⁸³⁵ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 19, my transl.; Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 49.

⁸³⁶ The bylina is an oral epic poem typical of the folklore of East Slavic lands from the early Middle Ages onwards.

⁸³⁷ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 50, my transl.

⁸³⁸ Lipski: "Dwie ojczyzny...", 56, my transl., also 51 and Holzer: "Europa Środkowa...", 8-10; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 22.

⁸³⁹ Holzer: "Europa Środkowa...", 10; Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 30.

This did not mean that Polish intellectuals held the Russian people responsible for the crimes and injustices committed against their nation. From the classic standpoint of history of international relations, the spotlight was put on Soviet decision-makers. Bearing in mind Poland's situation, anything that suggested that the USSR authorities were guilty of endless outrages was an official taboo, besides a risky business. Nevertheless, this was precisely the path that cautiously, but rigorously and firmly, Krystyna Kersten chose to follow in her works.

A.1) Case study: Could it have been otherwise? Krystyna Kersten's "rightful temptation" and the Soviet Union. Between powerlessness and the responsibility of power

When describing Krystyna Kersten's career and merits as a historian, some authors tend to highlight (as in fact she herself did) her commitment with impartiality and rationality, besides her search of truth—despite how painful, uncomfortable, many-sided or disappointing it may be. Her detailed analyses of Poland's international and socio-political situation in the mid- and late 1940's, of the perceptions, ideological divisions and intertwinement of different interests, set an outstanding precedent for following researches concerning that period and are unanimously praised⁸⁴⁰. However, in the main works Kersten developed during 1976-1989 we can spot a feature that has little to do with sticking to hard facts, and that we have already approached in Chapter 2 in connection with Jerzy Holzer's reflection on the establishment of Martial Law. In our student times, we used to call this tendency "historia-ficción" (*history-fiction*), but English readers are probably more familiar with *what ifs*.

In the preface to her *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948*, written in 1984, Kersten said that the aim of her research was to show the reasons and conditions in which decision-making processes took place, both little and big, in a large, national scale or an individual one. And pointed out: "I show their consequences; however, I don't assess these choices and decisions"⁸⁴¹. Nevertheless, she then added:

To do so would require the formulation of alternatives, for example: if [Stanisław] Mikołajczyk had reached an agreement earlier, the establishment of a Communist power could have been avoided, or the other way round: if Mikołajczyk hadn't reached an agreement, Communists wouldn't have managed to stabilize their government. Such examples can be endlessly multiplied: if the Political Bureau KC PPR had supported Gomułka in 1948, then..., if society's resistance had been greater..., if it had been less... I leave these up to the critical reflections of the readers.⁸⁴²

Thus, Kersten was perfectly aware of the doubts and *what if* questions many Poles had in mind, including herself. We appreciate this even better in her following works, where she explained herself more explicitly. For instance, in *Jałta w polskiej perspektywie* she argued that, despite historians tried to avoid speculations, these can actually be found within any historical narrative, as long as the latter is not a mere descriptive chronicle. Any assessment of the activities of historical subjects, any application of epithets or consideration of past words and deeds in the light of the

⁸⁴⁰ ROMEK, Zbigniew: *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944-1970*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Neriton/ Instytut Historii PAN, 2010, 313-325. Introducing other details: *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 2, 161-162; SZAROTA, Tomasz and LIBIONKA, Dariusz: "Od wydawców", in Kersten: *Pisma rozproszone...*, 5, quoting FRISZKE, Andrzej: *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu, 1939-1989*, Warszawa, Iskry, 2003.

⁸⁴¹ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 9.

⁸⁴² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 9, my transl.

results they yielded include *what ifs* implicitly⁸⁴³. To ignore them won't make them disappear: the "pasts-that-didn't-take-place" underlie in the historical narrative of a failure or a defeat. It is actually an understandable, even legitimate "temptation", and the fact that Kersten admitted that she couldn't help asking herself similar questions speaks not only of her integrity and personal commitment to remain as truthful as possible, but also about her tragic, intimate background: her father, Gniezno's regional public prosecutor Edmund Goławski, had been murdered in Katyń. Thus, this need to reflect about what went wrong, to find out who had the power to change things and carry out feasible and fairer alternatives, draws Kersten closer to Benjamin's hermeneutic proposals, at least much more than what we could have expected *a priori* due to the acknowledged preference she gave to facts and information over interpretation in history writing. But, as Reyes Mate and Michael Löwy remarked, the orthodoxy of historians-victims cannot be the same as the "orthodoxy" of the historians-winners:

The ragman's regard, the experience of living on the other side of history, is not taught in any conventional handbook. What that [historical] rubbish says is what guides the researcher in his/her path. That path is made of protests against its state of injustice and of inquiries about justice.⁸⁴⁴

In Benjamin's interpretation of historical materialism not only are the present and the future open, but also the past, which means, firstly, that the variant that succeeded wasn't the only possible one. Against the winners' history, the celebration of accomplished facts, the one-way historical paths, the inevitability of the victory of those who won, it is necessary to go back to the following essential observation: each present is open to multiple possible futures. In each historical moment there were alternatives which were not doomed to fail *a priori*: the exclusion of women from citizenship during the French Revolution was not unavoidable; Stalin's or Hitler's rise to power wasn't inescapable, like that of Brecht's Arturo Ui; the decision of dropping the atomic bomb over Hiroshima was far from inevitable. (...)

To open up the past means that the so-called 'trials of history' are by no means definitive or immutable. The future can re-open 'closed' historical records, 'restore' slandered victims, update defeated hopes and aspirations, rediscover forgotten fights or those considered 'utopic', 'anachronistic' and 'counter to progress'. In this case, to open up the past and to open up the future are closely linked.⁸⁴⁵

In her researches about the Yalta Conference (February 1945) and the establishment of Communist power in Poland in the midst of the 1940's, as well as in the first preface she wrote under a pseudonym for the journalist Teresa Torańska's *Oni* (1985)⁸⁴⁶, Krystyna Kersten wondered, for instance, whether it would have been possible to prevent Stalin from reaching his goals in Poland during the last phase of the Second World War. Could that have been achieved by the United States? Perhaps with different policies of Polish political leaders? Would have wiser representatives, the lack of a Polish Communist group willing to follow Moscow's plans and a stronger resistance of Polish society made a difference? And in such a case, were the alternatives "better" for Poland in terms of independence: to become an ally of the USSR but simultaneously a sovereign, democratic state able to develop economically and culturally (in other words, closer to Finland's situation); or were they "worse", that is, to become the seventeenth republic of the USSR? Kersten could go as far as posing her

⁸⁴³ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 242.

⁸⁴⁴ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 231, my transl.

⁸⁴⁵ Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 183, my transl.

⁸⁴⁶ Collection of Torańska's interviews (1980-81) to former Communist leaders of the Stalinist period and the 1960s who left the Party or had problems within it, but were never part of dissidence or opposition. An abridged English version: *'Them'. Stalin's Polish Puppets*, New York, Harper and Row, 1987.

doubts, but could not provide solid answers, nor a 100% reliable “prediction” (or rather *post-diction*?) of the “past-that-didn’t-take-place”⁸⁴⁷, though she made a clear bet in Benjamin’s line, as we will see.

In her aim to refute the widespread Polish perception of the Yalta Conference (i.e. that Poland was then betrayed and “sold” by the West to the Soviet Union), Krystyna Kersten asked herself yet another (as she called it) provoking question: “was Poland lost in Yalta?” In order to try to answer it, she would like to provide a general overview of the course of events and circumstances basing herself on the available sources of that time but without the “chains” of Polish stereotypes, despite assuming a Polish perspective⁸⁴⁸. This would apparently suit a classic self-perception of a “demythologizing-historian” in pursuit of truth, which is considered to fulfill a liberation task. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, Kersten would like to sit Polish society on a couch (a king-size one!), track down the roots of its trauma and unease, talk it out of its biased interpretations and make it approach the past otherwise in order to break those chains and enable it to advance.

However, the truth can be never complete, and is not always comforting. What’s more alarming still: it could get dangerously close, in the eyes of a “demythologizing-historian”, to other myths which were also intended to be dismantled. Kersten came up with the following inferences about her own inquiries:

To start with, Stalin followed a policy of *faits accomplis*. Within their early expansionist plans, the Soviet Union’s leaders already viewed the Second World War as an imperialist struggle; hence, their mission was to acquire influence in different countries during and after their liberation from Nazi troops (eg. foundation of military and political organizations) in order to rise to power at the right time and transform the imperialist World War into civil wars against national exploiters. Communists had become a political force to be taken on account in almost every liberated country by the end of the War. The result of the clashes between Communists and non-Communists in the late 1944 and early 1945 was not determined by internal factors, but by support coming from abroad: finally, Communists didn’t form a government or build a new political regime beyond Soviet military sphere, where they were politically stronger (Italy, France, Greece), but where they were weaker: in Poland, the Achilles’ heel of the area occupied by Soviet Union’s troops during the War⁸⁴⁹.

But even if Stalin hadn’t found in Poland a Communist group ready to make Moscow’s guidelines its own, or hadn’t been able to transform the USSR-sponsored Polish Committee of National Liberation⁸⁵⁰, which controlled *de facto* the liberated parts of the country since July 1944, into the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland⁸⁵¹ right before the Yalta Conference (January 1945), geopolitics would have probably had the last word anyway, Kersten argued⁸⁵². Due to the priority given to military goals above political and economic ones during the War, and to the decision of Western allies to delimit their military operations’ sphere up to Western Germany (except for Berlin) in 1943, the Soviet dominion area in Central-Eastern Europe was to a good extent decided beforehand⁸⁵³. It was the incipient clash of two mentalities: not only was Stalin a hard negotiator, but also the representative of a system that didn’t

⁸⁴⁷ Kersten: “W oczach...”, 21-22; Kersten: *Jalta...*, 242.

⁸⁴⁸ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 7-9, 15-16.

⁸⁴⁹ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 23-31.

⁸⁵⁰ Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN.

⁸⁵¹ Rząd Tymczasowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, RTRP.

⁸⁵² Kersten: “W oczach...”, 21.

⁸⁵³ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 17-26.

respect any rules or human rights, either within its borders or abroad. Unlike the U.S.' and Great Britain's leaders, he didn't have to take any public opinion or future elections on account. He took the occupation carried out by the Red Army as the effective and permanent establishment of his dominion over the region, and the Yalta Conference as its acknowledgment. Democracy was an empty word for him, but he was ready to make promises and pretend it mattered in front of his allies as a way of achieving his targets. Regarding Poland, Kersten believed Stalin's plans of establishing a Communist government in the country had taken full shape by 1944. The only aspects that were still undecided were how and when, that is, the way to act and the *tempo* of the process leading to the "construction of socialism" —in other words, of a country economically, ideologically, militarily and politically dependent on the USSR⁸⁵⁴.

However, in Kersten's *Jalta w polskiej perspektywie* we can also find the opposite impression: apparently contradicting herself, the author considered that not everything was settled before Yalta, and that the Conference was a *crossroads* rather than a sentence for Poland⁸⁵⁵. The Agreement was actually quite open in order for it to be accepted and signed by the three powers. If it had been literally interpreted and honestly put into practice, it would have meant Polish Communists' defeat, since they wouldn't have stood a chance of being in power after free, democratic elections. Nevertheless, Stalin managed to make his Western partners not include in the Agreement a clause guaranteeing the allies' supervision of those future elections and ensured to achieve by all means what he had in mind regardless what the Pact said⁸⁵⁶.

Instead of focusing on the role played by Western allies before and after Yalta, especially the U.S., Kersten wondered whether a wiser policy of Polish political leaders could have changed something, or if, at least, all resorts were used up in order to preserve Polish state's sovereignty and its nation's existence. Usually, she said, the Poles have a poor and very critical opinion of all political actors of the time: they reproach the Polish government-in-exile for its lack of realism, the Communists for their identification of the reasons of Polish state with Soviet interests, and Stanisław Mikołajczyk for his excessively conciliatory position. However, given the situation of the country and its inhabitants, she considered there couldn't have been a single policy: on one extreme, the government-in-exile lacked effective power inside Poland and was ignored by the allies in international meetings and compromises from 1944; its representatives demanded complete sovereignty and independence for Poland and, since its legitimacy was based precisely on the defense of these and other moral values and rights, to give up that claim would have been shameful and undignified, and hence unthinkable. On the other extreme, Polish Communists had effective power in the country thanks to Stalin, and that enabled them to organize Polish postwar life within the USSR's sphere, but in 1944-1945 the majority of the population regarded them as representatives of foreign interests supported by the Red Army and the USSR's People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKWD). They were Stalin's politicians, but in that context any government that wasn't under the USSR's control in Poland was non-viable, regardless whether Polish Communists considered Soviet patronage as a need or as the natural expression of ideological bonds between Moscow and Warsaw. These extremes, due precisely to their irreconcilable aims, were incapable of negotiating. Taking on account present-day knowledge on the topic, Kersten considered that Polish non-Communist politicians wouldn't have been able to prevent the inclusion

⁸⁵⁴ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 22-23, 34-35 70-71; Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 20-21; Kersten: "W oczach...", 12-13, 15-16.

⁸⁵⁵ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 69 and 244.

⁸⁵⁶ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 91-92, 97-98, also 9-12; Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 183-184.

of Poland in the USSR's area nor the Communists' rise to power; they could have only increased or diminished the costs and damages of the process.

But that wasn't so clear even by mid-1945, for there were still open variables. Bolesław Bierut's⁸⁵⁷ suggestion to Mikołajczyk of resigning as Prime Minister of the "reactionary" government-in-exile and joining the "democratic" (PKWN's) side in October 1944 was a betrayal proposal rather than a commitment. However, there was yet a meagre, narrow margin left for authentic politics, and it was based precisely on the Yalta Agreements. Thus, Mikołajczyk returned to Poland in December 1944 and tried to make the most of this small, single chance in a last attempt to avoid a Communist political monopoly in Poland, hoping to have Western allies' support and secure some concessions from Polish Communists when they finally realized they simply couldn't rule the country on their own due to the lack of internal support. But things turned out otherwise. Therefore, Kersten concluded, it wasn't the lack of political balance or realism, but the way the international situation developed what determined beforehand the defeat of all those who tried to preserve Polish nation's and state's existence without turning away from reality but, simultaneously, never supporting policies based on force or on the law of the strongest⁸⁵⁸. And she finished off:

Not every defeat proves that the defeated were wrong or that they didn't fulfill the requirements of political realism. Contrary to what is generally thought, back then the Soviet Union didn't have just a refusal on principle [Polish government-in-exile's position, C. A.] or an unconditional submission [complete Communist monopoly in Poland, C. A.] on the table, but also a readiness to acquire a reasonable commitment, as long as it was authentic, not a concealed capitulation, and in humiliating conditions.⁸⁵⁹

Regarding her discourse and evidences, could we assert that, for Kersten, everything was settled by the second half of World War II? Could have something else been decided afterwards? And in such case, by whom?

In my opinion, the author's work is not so much a general attempt to dismantle recent historical myths as a personal statement, a struggle and, finally, an accusation, besides a reminder for Polish society. While refuting the so-called "myth of Yalta" with the help of her sources, Kersten was, ironically, very close to acknowledging fatalism in the form of geopolitical determinism; she even described present-day geopolitics as a *curse* in the first preface she wrote for Torańska's *Oni*⁸⁶⁰. Apart from being definitely unfortunate, to be located between Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union and becoming their shared war booty certainly contributed to perpetuate the classic Polish view regarding their nation's previous situation between former Prussia-Germany and Russia. In the light of this unescapable condition, Kersten ended up recognizing the powerlessness both of Polish political actors, in spite of their multiple positions and attempts, and of Western allies⁸⁶¹, which she nevertheless questioned from the start and approached thoroughly along this and other essays in order to understand them.

But the author's main concern lies elsewhere. Unlike the supporters of the "myth of Yalta", who were too busy blaming the West categorically for Poland's setbacks, an apparently obvious question throbs in Kersten's arguments: what about the USSR? It is

⁸⁵⁷ Bierut was an NKWD agent and the leader of Polish Workers' Party since 1943. He was afterwards the first President of Communist Poland (1947-52).

⁸⁵⁸ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 30, 158, 242-244; also Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 224.

⁸⁵⁹ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 244, my transl.

⁸⁶⁰ Kersten: "W oczach...", 21, my italics.

⁸⁶¹ Besides the latter's different perception of the situation and the priority given to other goals, as we will see further on in this chapter.

at this point where hesitation and a personal struggle can be appreciated: on the one hand, the documents proved, and she actually believed, that in the midst of the War the Soviet Union had already decided that Poland's future would be Communist or simply wouldn't be. On the other, however, the documents also showed, and her democratic moral imperative told her, that Stalin had many chances to reconsider his decision and think about, for instance, "finlandization", the last one probably being the application of the Yalta Agreement (hence the fact she described it as a "crossroads"), but *he didn't*. And she wanted to make that point especially clear⁸⁶².

But what for? Did it really matter whether it was a question of fate or of free will? If it had been known or assumed back then that it was the latter, would it have made any difference in practice? Possibly not. However, it can make a crucial difference *today*, because it involves a change of perception both of the past and of present time. By reminding or showing Polish society the repressed source of its trauma, namely, that it was Stalin who first and foremost had the leading voice in negotiations since 1943, and thus *had a choice*, Kersten dismantled an unstated, far more threatening determinism underlying in the "myth of Yalta": the perception of the Soviet Union as an implacable, pre-programmed automaton or, in other words, as an irrational animal that cannot take responsibility for its instinctive, albeit brutal, actions. Nothing could be further from the truth: Soviet leaders, together with Polish Communists, were conscious of the harm they would cause in the name of so-called "progress", "democracy" or "greater good", that is, in the name of their (only half-concealed) thirst of power and greed, but didn't care, or even relished it. In this case, the truth is tough enough to face, but to de-humanize Soviet decision-makers and their Polish long arm meant doing them a favor, precisely because it exempted them from any responsibility towards the defeated, the fallen and, ultimately, towards Polish society as a whole.

⁸⁶² The idea of Russian or Soviet leaders breaking their promises, rejecting any kind of agreement and, in sum, acting against the Poles as much as they could and in a fully deliberate way is present in the discourses of many oppositionists. Very significantly, Adam Michnik explained the reasons for the outbreak of the November 1830 Uprising as follows: "The Congress of Vienna provided a chance for a Polish-Russian compromise. In return for broad freedoms inside the country, the Poles of the Congress Poland [the Kingdom of Poland created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna, C.A.] agreed to give up de facto their external sovereignty. But afterwards the compromise was broken. Not by the Poles. By the Russians. Resistance against the progressive restriction of public opinion in Congress Poland was something natural in that situation. An uprising was natural. (...) It was and is a message: that no international treaty —of Vienna or of Yalta— will wrest from the Poles the aspiration of being themselves, of being a sovereign subject-agent". Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 82, my transl., also Michnik: "On Resistance...", 57. Just like in Yalta, Russian and Soviet decision makers had alternative measures at hand, less harmful for Polish people, but did not want to apply them. Władysław Bartoszewski remembered how, during Warsaw Uprising, Soviet troops were ordered to remain passive and wait on the other side of the Vistula while the revolt was crushed by the Nazis. One could even contact telephonically with the General Headquarters of the Soviet Army, which informed them, but avoided staying in touch. They argued that the troops were exhausted, but the orders really came from "above". Not even Americans were allowed to land in a Soviet airport in order to help the Poles. This situation lasted six weeks. Americans and British were providing the Red Army with almost everything to survive and continue the battle (canned food, shoes, arms...), but they, in turn, were not allowed to land their planes beyond the frontline...: "The Russians stayed where they were. They hoped that the rest of Polish elite was bled white so that their coming to power was easier. The dirty work was left for the Germans. The capital of Poland was destroyed". (Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 31, my transl.) Jumping further ahead in time, Jerzy Holzer also interpreted that all the efforts on Polish side to come to terms with the Soviet Union, from the postwar Polish People's Party (PSL) and Socialist Party (PPS) to 1956, 1970 and December 13th 1981 events, had been of no use because, at bottom, the USSR did not want to reach any kind of agreement and had always opposed fiercely to the wishes of society of limiting the Communist monopoly over the government, political institutions and information. Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 350.

It is not surprising, then, that a stereotype that diverted people's attention from the core, most conflictive issue of Polish recent past and sought scapegoats or culprits elsewhere should be very convenient for Communist authorities, and thus fueled during forty years by politicians, propagandists, pro-governmental historians and *publicyści*, besides also being supported by many oppositionists.

A widespread "myth" such as Yalta's was simultaneously dangerous and harmless: dangerous, because it actively contributed to the establishment of a bitter, disappointed, conformist or resigned view of the country's history and, by extension, of present time; harmless, precisely because it rendered present time sterile, in the sense it wouldn't help oppositionists nor Polish society to challenge Communist rule and improve things. In other words, the present can't fully become *Jetztzeit* because it's prisoner of a paralyzing, incapacitating view of the past. Kersten was conscious of this dependence when she remarked earlier, in *Narodziny systemu władzy*, that

In writing this book about the past, I think about the future. We need history not only as an element of national survival but also as a component of political thought, which is experiencing rebirth. Our 'today' is so deeply rooted in our 'yesterday' that we won't be able to plan future actions rationally without a deep comprehension⁸⁶³ of that 'yesterday'.⁸⁶⁴

Similarly, she dedicated *Jalta w polskiej perspektywie* "to all those who seek knowledge about the past in order to think about the future", and considered that the problems she posed should be seen as "a lesson in politics"⁸⁶⁵. Politics regarded in this case as "the art of the possible", as a democratic will to negotiate that takes circumstances on account, a midway path between unrealistic, far-out demands and a surrender equivalent to giving up *imponderabilia*, set up against immoral "anti-politics" founded in totalitarian intransigence.

It's about not taking for granted that things had to turn out as they finally did. It's about identifying those ultimately responsible for frustrated chances, unfulfilled commitments and past crimes with a view, in the first place, to exercising the moral right to claim justice, and, in the second place, to demanding a better future where there will be no room left for such outrages. Finally, it's about not allowing the "winner" to get his way and to eventually succeed in his hermeneutic goal for, if he achieved it, the real, serious wounds of Polish society would never be healed. That is, to put it in Václav Havel's words, *the power of the powerless*.

In sum, Kersten's approach is a warning about the peril of accepting deceit (whether out of pain and resentment or out of indoctrination) and yielding subsequently to oblivion. Rather than final, soothing rest, to promote such a reinterpretation of history can make a society experience a productive combination of unrest and relief based on action and on remembrance, not only of the defeated, but also of what the opponent-"winner" can be capable of if given the chance. The inevitability of certain "given" facts, such as a geographic location, must be assumed, but not of those dependent on human will. No-one should be exempted from that moral imperative.

⁸⁶³ In my opinion, besides its intellectual meaning, "zrozumienie" in this case could also be translated as "understanding" in its most emotional, affective sense.

⁸⁶⁴ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 10, my transl.

⁸⁶⁵ Kersten: *Jalta...*, 8-9, 16, 244.

B) Western countries

“Your father’s gone,” my bald headmaster said. (...)

I was a month past ten when I learnt this:
I still remember how the noise was stilled
In school-assembly when my grief came in.
Some goldfish in a bowl quietly sculled
Around their shining prison on its shelf.
They were indifferent. All the other eyes
Were turned towards me. Somewhere in myself
Pride, like a goldfish, flashed a sudden fin.

Edward Lucie-Smith: *The Lesson*

Despite many oppositionists regarded Western (European) countries as the antithesis of what the Soviet Union or Communism represented to them in terms of values and principles (Chapter 2), Polish views about the West were not always as positive as one might have expected⁸⁶⁶.

Basically, this phenomenon had to do with two related aspects: firstly, with the differences between Polish and Western European modern historical experiences concerning freedom and suffering; and, secondly, with unfulfilled expectations.

To start with, some intellectuals were concerned about Western Europe’s increasing monopoly over the concept of “Europe”, especially since the integration process of the European Economic Community began to take off. Not only did they fear being left *behind* in terms of development, but simply being left *out* of the West’s agendas and minds, becoming a kind of foreign and second-rate “Eurasian” partner⁸⁶⁷.

However, the fact that Western Europeans questioned or did not acknowledge the “Europeanness” of Eastern Bloc inhabitants did not make the former perfect, nor superior in relation to the latter. The European ideals which should, in Polish eyes, be the guidelines of social life and the code of ethical conduct in the continent, clashed with the real behaviors and practical situations that many Polish travelers and emigrants had witnessed in the West. These impressions about the “good” and the “bad” side of Western European countries were ingrained in Polish cultural spheres since uprising times and the ensuing emigration waves to France, England, etc.:

The following question of those years [first half of the nineteenth century, C.A.] dealt with the relations of the Poles, of a torn nation, with the world. It was suitably and fully formulated precisely by émigrés: the question about the meaning of Poland’s existence between Russia and the West. Back then, the West was for the Poles the symbol of civilization and democracy, but also of mercantilism and petit bourgeois spirit⁸⁶⁸, as Zygmunt Krasiński said. The country idealized the West, the émigrés unmasked it. Thus, the relation of the Poles with the West was ambivalent, just like the range of experiences of a French writer and a Polish writer were different; the experiences, let’s say, of Balzac and Mickiewicz.⁸⁶⁹

Such an assessment stressed that Poland remained faithful to European ideals and kept a more essentialist position in the continent due to the undergone hardships and national catastrophes, whereas Western European countries living in more favorable

⁸⁶⁶ Though such ambivalence also has century-old roots: Törnquist Plewa: “The Complex...”.

⁸⁶⁷ Holzer: “Europa Środkowa...”, 8; Lipski: “Czy Polska leży...?”, 26.

⁸⁶⁸ “Duch krawiecki” means literally “tailor spirit”.

⁸⁶⁹ Michnik: “Powstanie listopadowe...”, 85, my transl.; another view in PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 197-198.

circumstances slid into materialism and excessive pragmatism, which eventually led to a crisis of values.

The political myth about a European or Western European moral plight is neither new nor exclusive of Polish or Eastern European authors: Tony Judt's *Postwar*, for instance, contains pretty much the same theses⁸⁷⁰. In Poland's specific case, this is closely related to the idealist-realist dilemma we have gone through before (Chapter 1).

The founder of the *endecja* party, Roman Dmowski, once said that great men were dreamers and that, on the contrary, an excellent good sense only produced average people—who were typical of the West. Inspiring himself in these words, Andrzej Micewski believed that dreamers could still be found among old and young Polish generations, and that it was precisely an excess of sensibleness in Western governments what had boosted Adolf Hitler's territorial ambitions during the interwar period. Since the signature of the Yalta agreements, Czesław Bielecki stated, Western European countries had ceased to fight for a free world; and, after the Second World War, they were blinded by economic miracles and enrichment aspirations, only to find themselves at a loss before civilizational threats and the phantom of economic recession shortly afterwards. In the opinion of Polish intellectuals, as well as of other Central and Eastern European oppositionists like Václav Havel, it was as if the West had taken for granted the principles that formed the basis of their identity and had become far too smug, too indifferent, pliable and easy-going regarding their defense. Immerse in moral decadence, Western Europeans did not realize that those values required a nonconformist attitude and many sacrifices in order to be preserved; sacrifices which, ironically, only Central and Eastern Europeans had been ready to make, given their continual exposure to existential danger⁸⁷¹.

Stefan Kisielewski, who sometimes shared with his readers his impressions of his journeys to Western Europe, once explained in *Tygodnik Powszechny* that the differences between Eastern and Western Europeans, despite existing, were not insurmountable if relativistic and euphemistic attitudes were left aside and a real dialogue was established. The setting of his anecdote was the conference "Education in Europe: culture and specialization", held in Hamburg in January 1976⁸⁷². Many Western European intellectuals attended the meeting, while just a few Polish and Romanian experts managed to come from the Eastern Bloc. When they had the floor, Western European specialists delivered very technical and pragmatic speeches focused on the development of high-level educational policies; however, according to Kisielewski, their words lacked real ideas, something that stimulated discussions and authentic "brain life". He also realized that they were not taking on account Eastern European reality so, when it was his turn to speak, the author complained about this. He said that lecturers were not bearing in mind that there were two Europes, with two very different education systems. And he went on to explain what the Eastern European system was like, while perceiving how his audience became increasingly uncomfortable. After him, a Romanian colleague explained the matter in an even harder way, and only then the curse broke.

⁸⁷⁰ JUDT, Tony: *Postwar. A history of Europe since 1945*, London, William Heinemann, 2005; Ifversen: "Myth in the Writing...", 474-479.

⁸⁷¹ Micewski: "Polski temat", 337-344; Micewski: "Tożsamość...", 2; BIELECKI, Czesław [pseud. Maciej Poleski]: "Polityka niepodległościowa. Obóz i świat", in Bielecki: *Wolność...*, 17-18; Kisielewski: "Głos z drugiej...", 134-140; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 41-42; HAVEL, Václav: "The Co-responsibility of the West (an article written for *Foreign Affairs*, December 22, 1993)", in Havel: *The Art...*, 137-138.

⁸⁷² KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: "Zachód, Wschód, mózg nie używany", in Kisielewski: *Lata pozłacane...*, 519-524.

All of a sudden, people began to speak their minds freely about these East-West differences, as if before they had been refraining themselves out of cautiousness, consideration, mistrust or, perhaps, ignorance or indifference. But now the silence was broken: the audience was exchanging opinions, taking up controversial issues, doubting, questioning, laughing, scoffing, accusing, so that the previous inactive brains engaged in revising terms and sanctified ideas or pseudo-ideas. It was certainly a memorable moment: “We, who have eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, suddenly run after experts⁸⁷³ in this cautious, material world. Idealistic ‘aesthetes’⁸⁷⁴, discussions and disputes without object enjoyed some good days then! It’s a shame that so seldom”⁸⁷⁵. Faced by Eastern European *intelligentsia*, Western European experts stepped out of their specialization comfort zone and re-discovered their original, intellectual nature, taking up substantive broad debates again without turning their backs on the real, fundamental problems of the “other” Europeans, and their own⁸⁷⁶.

The image of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which appeared from time to time in Kisielewski’s texts⁸⁷⁷, suggested the loss of innocence of the Eastern Bloc countries due to their geopolitical conditions and, at the same time, the moral capability of its inhabitants of telling good and evil apart, of calling a spade a spade and pinning down the essentials instead of being in a tangle with details and technicalities. Their burdensome past and present, full of victims, appointed them bearers of a universal warning message:

This[, the *Lumpen* who suffers, gets indignant and protests, C.A.] is the subject-agent who can know what the rest (who oppress, rule or pass by without stopping) can’t know. Their cognitive bonus consists of a regard loaded with experience and focused on the reality which we all inhabit. In a social State governed by the rule of law, this regard can tell that those who are oppressed live in a permanent state of emergency, or that what is considered as progress by the majority is at bottom a process of ruins and corpses, as the angel of history of [Walter Benjamin’s, C.A.] ninth thesis says. (...) To know is to possess a visual acuity that sees the unwonted in the objects, situations or events we all look at. It is a regard that shakes the established securities which constitute the basis of our social life, even in democracy.⁸⁷⁸

In this case, such regard came from beyond democratic countries, not from within, but it nevertheless questioned the foundations of Western European postwar systems, for the alleged progress the latter experienced since the mid-1940s had been, in a way, built upon the loss of independence and freedom of the other half of Europe. Stefan Kisielewski and his Romanian colleagues in Hamburg were the reminder of an inconvenient, neighboring reality that proved that progress very rarely meant progress for all, and that their nations were the victims of those improvements and, in sum, of “peace”. The first step to overcome that situation was to admit its existence and, secondly, to promote a free dialogue without prejudices between both parts.

Moral far-sightedness was the legacy that the (former) Eastern Bloc countries could offer the West. Václav Havel insisted on this further ahead in time, in his presidential speeches:

⁸⁷³ The literal phrase goes “biegamy oto nagle za ekspertów”, whose meaning is particularly difficult to tell. We have ventured that translation for the sake of completing the sentence. In any case, this doesn’t alter the general sense and message of the article.

⁸⁷⁴ In Polish, the word *pięknoduch* has an ironic meaning.

⁸⁷⁵ Kisielewski: “Zachód, Wschód...”, 524, my transl.

⁸⁷⁶ Kisielewski: “Głos z drugiej...”, 140.

⁸⁷⁷ Kisielewski: “Głos z drugiej...”, 138; *Testament Kisiela...*, 138-139, conversation date: 25-IV-1991.

⁸⁷⁸ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 20-21, my transl.

The communist type of totalitarian system has left both our nations, Czechs and Slovaks—as it has all the nations of the Soviet Union, and the other countries the Soviet Union subjugated in its time—a legacy of countless dead, an infinite spectrum of human suffering, profound economic decline, and above all enormous human humiliation. It has brought us horrors that, fortunately, you [the U.S. people, C.A.] have never known.

At the same time—unintentionally, of course—it has given us something positive: a special capacity to look, from time to time, somewhat further than those who have not undergone this bitter experience. Someone who cannot move and live a normal life because he is pinned under a boulder has more time to think about his hopes than someone who is not trapped in this way.

What I am trying to say is this: we must all learn many things from you [the U.S., C.A.], from how to educate our offspring and how to elect our representatives, to how to organize our economic life so that it will lead to prosperity and not poverty. But this doesn't have to be merely assistance from the well-educated, the powerful, and the wealthy to those who have nothing to offer in return.

We, too, can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it.⁸⁷⁹

In the end, those who expected the worst from the Soviet Union in the closing stages of the World War had the right perception after all. It seems, however, that American decision-makers did not have such a clear view from the start.

Krystyna Kersten pointed out in her monographs that Polish diplomats and politicians were convinced that the USSR wanted to profit from its military victories and carry out its expansionist plans before the War ended. A Soviet policy based on *faits accomplis* was extremely dangerous for Central and Eastern European nations in such circumstances, and so they let their Western allies know. Nevertheless, back then the U.S. leaders did not want to side with small countries or be forced into a military intervention against the Soviet Union. They thought that only great powers should reach an agreement about territorial matters, and believed in Stalin's *bona fide* and promises about the celebration of free elections in Poland after the War.

By autumn 1945, when the Communists' grip on Poland was consolidating, the United States' policy towards the Soviet Union began to change in a gradual but firm way. The doctrine of containment, based on a counteroffensive to restrain the Soviet advance in other parts of the world, especially Europe and Asia, started to take shape. But it was already too late for the countries in the eastern bank of the Elbe.

Certain American researchers of the postwar period considered that the adverse outcome of the Polish case actually played an important role in the transformation of the United States' perception of world politics. In 1944 and the beginning of 1945, Poland was basically seen as an important piece in the collaboration game between the allies. Further on, Stalin's increasingly brutal and intransigent position regarding the advances of Communists in the country was one of the first signs that sapped the hopes for a peaceful international cooperation. The ripening process of the new Western strategy concluded with the Potsdam Conference (July-August 1945) and the ensuing meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London and Moscow (September and December 1945), where the fate of the III Reich's former satellites was discussed. At that point, little could be done for the nations occupied by the Red Army⁸⁸⁰.

Polish modern historical experience couldn't have been more different from that of the Western countries. While each of the latter made their way towards national sovereignty and gradually developed democratic systems, public opinion and

⁸⁷⁹ HAVEL, Václav: "A Joint Session of the U.S. Congress. Washington, D.C., February 21, 1990", in Havel: *The Art...*, 17-18; also Havel: "Asahi Hall...", 99.

⁸⁸⁰ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 17-20; Kersten: *Jalta...*, 240-241.

citizenship, Poland was deprived of the right to do so for more than a century⁸⁸¹. But despite it had survived Tsars and Kaisers, two World Wars, Hitler and Stalin; despite it had tasted, in sum, the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil over and over again since the partitions' period, the warnings of the Nation That Knew Too Much were repeatedly disregarded by the West. And so it was necessary for the desperate Polish Cassandra to endure another defeat and become once more the "Christ of nations" to make the U.S. leaders understand the real intentions of the Soviet Union. Apparently, Kisielewski said, Western intellectuals and politicians had been unable to foresee something that any Eastern European common citizen, actually any child, saw quite clearly⁸⁸².

Though they referred to shameful and terrible events, it is easy to catch a glimpse of pride's "sudden fin" in opposition *inteligencja*'s words: the feeling that Poland's fate since the Nazi invasion had somehow changed world history, besides reinforcing the Poles' moral superiority over the West, could be strangely comforting. But nobody should be deceived: history was an untamable runaway horse; only that the "chosen nations" knew much better than others what its face was really like:

In general, having frequent dealings with Western culture, I have come to the conclusion that we, here, in the East, possess a knowledge about the mechanism of history and what goes on behind the scenes that they [Western Europeans, C.A.] just cannot imagine, despite they regard us so proudly as a province. A province of the world fully loaded with useless historical wisdom—useless, since it does not provide any happiness.⁸⁸³

But even if Poland's cry was ignored in the short term, the seeds of the forbidden fruit had been sowed. Something good could now sprout from them if the Poles shared their recent traumatic experiences and Western countries were willing to listen.

The lessons that the West could learn from Central European inhabitants were varied. To start with, they understood how Bolshevik totalitarianism worked from the inside. Great Polish literature about Soviet gulags had escaped Western readers' notice, and that had delayed for about a decade the knowledge about the Soviet imperium's repressive nature. It was time to recover these and other texts, and make an effort to get to know Central and Eastern Europe's multiple traditions and specificities, instead of superficially regarding the region as a whole due to its geopolitical conditions⁸⁸⁴.

Secondly, Poland could provide Western Europe with moral guidance, pull it out of the materialistic spiral it was swirling in and encourage it to retrieve the principles that it was about to lose:

In the face of such a widespread hangover⁸⁸⁵, wouldn't a tiny bit of romanticism and, as they call it there, political idealism, be very necessary for the West? It even looks as if such awareness is ripening there and begins to bear fruit. Moreover, this is nothing other than simply returning to the sources and values of Western culture, of Greco-Roman European culture.⁸⁸⁶

According to Bronisław Geremek, there was also "in Polish fate a certain lesson of sense of community". The protest and opposition experiences of the last years, said

⁸⁸¹ Geremek: "Dwa narody", 6.

⁸⁸² *Testament Kisiela...*, 138-139, conv. date: 25-IV-1991, also 171-172, 27-VII-1991.

⁸⁸³ KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: "Ja jestem figurynka z porcelany", in Kisielewski: *Lata pozłacane...*, 583, my transl.

⁸⁸⁴ Lipski: "Czy Polska leży...?", 30; Beylin, Bieliński and Michnik: "Polska leży...", 2.

⁸⁸⁵ In Polish, *kociokwik* has also a colloquial sense.

⁸⁸⁶ Micewski: "Polski temat", 344, my transl., also PPN, "Polska i Europa", 199.

the historian in 1986, were based on high social aspirations, like the diminishment of collective and individual damages within Communist regime, the encouragement of pluralism in representation systems, the sponsorship of real participation of people in public life and the search of different ways of building a direct democracy. “Because the sense of solidarity towards others demanded to act for others”, the first protests of the Gdańsk shipyards in defense of Anna Walentynowicz⁸⁸⁷, of whom her companions highlighted her moral qualities and sense of justice, did not end when the workers’ salaries were increased. That communal spirit was not just a response to the lack of democracy and of free will in Poland, but a suggestion to build a fairer, more equal and fraternal European *polis* in order to overcome the crisis of democracy in the continent, “a proposal that cannot go unnoticed in Europe, for it reminds it about the values it has, but can lose, as well as about the values it doesn’t have, but can attain”⁸⁸⁸.

Lastly, *inteligencja* insisted once again in the importance of Poland as a cultural or civilizational bridge, this time between Western European countries and Communist satellite nations, in order to draw them closer together and set an example for others to follow behind the Iron Curtain:

The Poles must remember that the role of bridge, intermediary and promoter is one of the fundamental components of Polish historical tradition, it’s what determines its indispensability in the community of European cultures.

Our efforts to preserve our own national identity and at the same time the continuity of our historical traditions and links with European countries means much to other nations, also dominated by the USSR, especially Czechoslovakia and Hungary. These countries are also equally linked to Western Europe concerning their past and their cultural contents.⁸⁸⁹

The second point of friction discussed in opposition intellectuals’ texts had to do with Poland’s disenchantment and unfulfilled expectations regarding the West. In Tadeusz Łepkowski’s opinion, the hope of being unselfishly aided by Western countries when their nation was in peril dated back to Napoleonic times and had become a heavy burden in Polish minds and perceptions:

During this period [eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, C.A.] there was a single and shortly successful attempt of regenerating Poland with the support of the West, that is, of the Napoleonic Empire. It is difficult to overestimate the importance that the Duchy of Warsaw had in the preservation of Polishness and of the faith in a future independent Polish state. However, this success of pro-independence initiatives under the protection of a united West (for as such must be understood Napoleonic France) is at the same time our damnation. Since Napoleon Bonaparte’s times up until today, and precisely because the West once helped us in an effective way, we drag a chain of politically deceptive conceptions that boil down to the following: it will happen again, it must happen again, it is necessary to rely on the West, regardless whether its name is Napoleon III, Chamberlain, Churchill, Roosevelt or Reagan, for only the West can help us to regain complete independence. What is the reason for this past and present illusion? The reason is that, despite having sensible and brilliant studies about the Napoleonic question, we always make the same mistake. We believe (deep in our hearts, obviously) that the Emperor of the French aided us out of mere liking and sympathy, us and only us (‘God is with Napoleon, Napoleon with us’). However, if our thoughts were more in line with the truth, that is, with the fact that the Polish issue was just part of a new global organization of Europe, the conclusions would be certainly different. If a complete change in the European system depended on the West (understood as a specific and

⁸⁸⁷ Anna Walentynowicz (1929-2010), worker in the Gdańsk shipyards and later one of the most prominent members of *Solidarność*, developed protest and oppositional activities since the 1950s, for which she was repeatedly repressed and, finally, fired on August 7th 1980. Her companions demanded her readmission in the strike they initiated on August 14th. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 3.

⁸⁸⁸ Geremek: “Dwa narody”, 6, my transl., highlighted in the original.

⁸⁸⁹ PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 199, my transl.

variable dominant center in the West), maybe Poland would be economically and politically necessary as an integral part of it. Nevertheless, if the established or planned system can do without an independent Poland, then no altruistic help will be ever provided to the unfortunate country of the Vistula. One cannot expect this. Especially when in the twentieth century the role and strength of Germany and Russia is what really counts, and thus not Poland.⁸⁹⁰

For Western great powers, as for any other country, national interests are the major priority, if not the single. Therefore, Poland would be just one more token in the international board, and political actors only helped each other when it was convenient for them and expected to receive something in exchange. Regardless whether he deemed it unfair or not, Łepkowski considered that the Poles should assume the real rules of the game in order not to experience further disappointments.

In relation to this, it was important for them to understand as well that much of the harm which they blamed the West for was simply the result of decisions based on different perceptions of the international context and its limitations, not a consequence of “personal” dislike or indifference towards Poland and a subsequent betrayal.

Stalin acted in an opportunistic and realistic way, sounding out how far the USSR could go in its expansionist scheme before the Western allies tried to stop it. Many in Washington still believed in his words in 1944-1945 and were unaware of his intention of building a broad influence area in Central-Eastern Europe and the Balkans controlled *de facto* by Moscow.

Despite not wanting a Communist Poland, Central-Eastern Europe was a secondary region in Washington’s foreign policy. The main goal for the U.S. was to reorganize the world through the UN with the USSR’s cooperation, so it left some controversial issues open to argument, including the Polish, in order to negotiate with Russia and secure its collaboration in the global project. The United States’ president and some of his diplomats thought mistakenly that the main problem for the Soviet Union had to do with future borders instead of with political systems. The lukewarm reaction of Great Britain and the U.S. when the USSR broke its relations with the Polish government-in-exile persuaded Stalin to go ahead with his plans.

Home affairs also influenced the development of the negotiations: according to Krystyna Kersten, Franklin D. Roosevelt eluded duties and postponed decisions about postwar order until the November 1944 presidential elections were over, so time was definitely on Stalin’s side.

The future of Central and Eastern Europe was therefore shaped under an enormous Soviet pressure that was only feebly opposed by Western leaders, who were convinced about their own impotence concerning the territories already occupied by the Red Army. The formation of the USSR-promoted Provisional Government of National Unity⁸⁹¹ at the end of spring 1945 was regarded by Western governments as the partial fulfilment of the Yalta treaty, so they withdrew from the Polish affair and allowed the celebration of unsupervised elections, trying at all costs to avoid the outbreak of another war that would confront the former allies⁸⁹².

Despite the attempts to understand the complexity of the situation in an impartial way, there was nevertheless an inescapable tinge of disappointment and indignation in opposition historical discourses for, at bottom, many intellectuals felt that Western countries could have behaved less pliantly and more firmly, but turned a blind eye and shielded themselves behind the theory of the Yalta agreements instead of mobilizing

⁸⁹⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 20, my transl.

⁸⁹¹ Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej, TRJN.

⁸⁹² Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 23-25, 33-34, 42, 88, 98-99, 128, 227-228; *Jalta...*, 29, 31, 34-35, 45, 241; “W oczach...”, 22.

against what was going on in practice. And things hadn't changed much in the next decades: when present-day military and economic interests prevailed over cultural and spiritual values, Central-Eastern Europe ceased to exist in the West's international considerations⁸⁹³.

In any case, since seeking for foreign aid had always rendered such poor results, Poland's survival strategy should definitely change, *inteligenci* said. The Poles should begin to help themselves before asking others to help them out.

Adam Michnik did not see anything new in this idea: it was simply one of the nineteenth-century "Polish questions"...

Already back then the following question was posed: whom can the Poles count on? The governments or the people? —asked Maurycy Mochnecki. And the Poles answered (though they never expressed it directly) that they could neither count on the governments, nor on the people of Western Europe. They could only count on themselves. Naturally, the international context could help them. (Naturally, the voice of public opinion could support them). But beyond these changing circumstances we must be capable of attaining independence and freedom. We must build independence and freedom within ourselves, from the inside.⁸⁹⁴

In one of his better-known essays, Czesław Bielecki compared Poland's situation at the end of the 1970s with that of a very peculiar internment camp. Its guards and watchmen (Communist authorities) had lost their confidence, while the prisoners, i.e. the rest of the Poles, were not afraid of them anymore. But no-one thought that things could be changed; prisoners comforted themselves instead by wishing that somebody else would come to rescue them someday. Until it gradually dawned on them that they had to free the camp for and by themselves⁸⁹⁵. It was no use turning to the countries officially representing European principles in search of salvation, for "the only Democratic International that can help us is the one that *we* set up. After all the western defeats in the fight against Communism from the outside, it is clear that the Empire-camp can only be blown up from the inside. And we must expect nothing more than sympathy and understanding in this"⁸⁹⁶.

To rely on the "powerful" was a mistake, *inteligencja* thought, for who could be more powerful in the defense of Polish independence, rights and freedoms than the Poles themselves? That is what the poster in Figure 1⁸⁹⁷ tried to transmit to society in the words of one of its national heroes, the leader of the 1794 Uprising Tadeusz Kościuszko: "Poles! You have everything you need for success —just *dare* to succeed". To wait for Godot, who would certainly not come by, made people fall into despair, as Havel cleverly remarked. So why not try to be patient and cherish hopes in one's own power instead, why not try to work and resist despite not seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in the short term?⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹³ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 9; PPN, "Polska i Europa", 197.

⁸⁹⁴ Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 86, my transl.; also Michnik: "Letter from the Gdańsk...", 94.

⁸⁹⁵ Bielecki: "Wolność w obozie", 9.

⁸⁹⁶ Bielecki: "Polityka niepodległościowa...", 21, my transl., my italics.

⁸⁹⁷ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

⁸⁹⁸ Havel: *The Art...*; PONTUSO, James F.: *Václav Havel: Civic Responsibility in the Postmodern Age*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, esp. chapter 6.



Figure 1

This did not mean they were completely alone in their struggle. Just like Kisielewski and the Romanian guests of the Hamburg conference had to speak up first about their difficult situation in order to break the ice of the Cold War and encourage their Western partners to make a move, Polish opposition in Poland and abroad should “make some noise” about it too, “cause a stir, prove our liveliness and determination to live”, challenging the indifference (fortunately, most times only initial) of democratic European countries⁸⁹⁹.

Thus, opposition intellectuals’ formula to make the Poles overcome their emotional and psychological dependence on the West split into two counterbalanced measures: on the one hand, they played down the importance of Poland in the international arena (i.e. Poland is definitely *not* the center of the world and of others’ concerns, there are no Don Quixotes in foreign affairs ministries); on the other hand, they boosted the morale and self-assurance of their fellow countrymen and made them focus on what they could be capable of if they only tried. In other words, they readjusted the object of Polish pride, hopes and strength.

To sum up, Polish *inteligenci* sought moral acknowledgement from Western countries for being up to the task of preserving European principles in very adverse circumstances. They wanted to share their defeats in order to give them a redemptive meaning, but also their latest successes, and feel part of a “trans-Berlin-Wall” European community. At the same time, they wanted to avoid old pitfalls concerning Poland’s reliance on foreign aid. By speaking about and overcoming the barriers present in the Poles’ perceptions, *inteligenci* made their compatriots gain confidence in their own capacities and encouraged them to find solutions to their socio-political situation for themselves, helping them to gain back their *podmiotowość*.

⁸⁹⁹ “Od redakcji”, in Holzer *et al.*: *Myśli o naszej...*, 3, my transl.; Bielecki: “Polityka niepodległościowa...”, 21-22; PPN, “Polska i Europa”, 196; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 4.

Chapter 4

A Question of Time

What do Poles talk about in jail? About the same things they always have, the same things as their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers did when they were jailed in the pavilions of the Citadel [in Warsaw]. Today, the Citadel no longer exists. The jail has been replaced by a museum of the revolutionary movement. But the myth of the Citadel remains, as does the symbol of the Citadel. Now we have Białołęka. Will a commemorative plaque be placed here one day?

Adam Michnik: "Conversation in the Citadel"

Das Bewußtsein, das Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen, ist den revolutionären Klassen im Augenblick ihrer Aktion eigentümlich. Die Große Revolution führte einen neuen Kalender ein.

Walter Benjamin: "Über den Begriff der Geschichte, These XV"

L'année 1989 transgresse la logique des calendriers. Elle est importante en tant qu'expérience de libération d'un système autoritaire car d'autres encore emprunteront cette voie. Elle est importante parce que, d'une certaine manière, elle n'est pas terminée, ses conséquences ne sont pas toutes connues. Cette formidable révolution pacifique ne peut pas être éclipsée par l'ombre des périls en gestation; ceux-ci passeront.

Bronisław Geremek: *La rupture*

Polish inhabitants' liking for historical knowledge in its historicist form and the trouble it could eventually cause was already a subject of concern for researchers like the Polish émigré Adam Bromke back in the 1960s, when he pointed out that

There exists strong historicism among the Poles. Especially in times of crisis, they almost instinctively turn to history to look for answers to the problems with which they are faced. This, however, carries with it the danger that, in drawing historical parallels, *comparaison [sic.] n'est pas raison*, the Poles might be overimpressed with the past and ignore the new elements of the situation.⁹⁰⁰

Fortunately for opposition circles, Bromke's apprehension did not become a large-scale reality during the next decades. Many critical intellectuals, regardless of their specific profession, were certainly deeply allured by history, but that did not overshadow their present-day political commitment. Quite on the contrary, they reinforced both aspects of their identity through their combination, for opposition *inteligencja* proposed to build present time with the materials of the past. By paying attention to Poland's frustrated pasts, *inteligenci* brought the authority and legitimacy of the factual into question, and thus carried out a political and epistemological subversion⁹⁰¹.

⁹⁰⁰ Bromke: *Poland's Politics...*, 253, footnote.

⁹⁰¹ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 122

In previous chapters, especially the first and the second, we have seen how oppositionists established a continuity in spirit with their defeated predecessors—though not always in method and hardly ever in political specificities or programs—; how they interpreted, valued and inspired in their thought and lives in present time; the recovery of what was lost or taken away, like society's *podmiotowość*; the dread of making the same mistakes or living through the same things again; the fondness for the old, but also for the new and the unprecedented in the building of an aware citizenry. All of this engendered a specific perception of time within intellectuals' narratives that was stated through the blend of cyclic and lineal images of the past and a keen interest in the pioneering aspects of Polish protests and opposition movements. Both ingredients, repetition and novelty, stimulated historical awareness and the historicization of present time, which entailed the belief in the capability (or incapability) to change the course of events and break with the winners' time *continuum*, the notions of power and responsibility, the question of posterity and the search for truth, as well as the massive gathering, writing and publication of documents related to opposition activities. We will deal with all these topics here, in the fourth and last chapter of the work, where hopes and fears swirl together from the beginning right until the very end.

A) “The return of the new”*. Cyclic and lineal perceptions of time and the pioneer question

... Every one a revengeful burst
Of resurrection, a grasped fistful
Of splintered weapons and Icelandic frost thrust up

From the underground stain of a decayed Viking.

(...) Then they grow grey, like men.
Mown down, it is a feud. Their sons appear,
Stiff with weapons, fighting back over the same ground.

Ted Hughes: *Thistles*

The idea of a cyclic evolution of history began to settle in Polish consciousness after the Commonwealth lost its independence and statehood at the end of the eighteenth century, spreading and fortifying with each repressed revolt against partitioning powers. From then on, the third and definite division of Poland was regarded by many as a brutal interruption of the country's historical development and continuity⁹⁰².

For Ewa Domańska, such a perception contains both mythical and religious elements, specifically “pagan notions of the tragic” and “Christian notions of redemption” that transform the Poles' frustrated struggles and sacrifices in a source of strength, besides of pride and glory:

This means that defeat and death for a noble cause are in themselves redemptive, having ritual values of ontological transformation, and are not merely the means of attaining life after death. Poles have had many tragic reversals in the past, but the sufferings caused by those events did not humiliate so much as inspire them. In this sense, suffering has had a cathartic value. (...) ... I would claim that when the myth of sacrifice is analysed on the basis of Polish consciousness, it becomes a place where Christianity and paganism, and religion and myth come together. On one hand,

* In Polish the saying goes “wraca nowe!”. Taken from Smolar: “Prosta i koło”, 95.

⁹⁰² Two examples: Kijowski: “O wariatach...”, 8; Wereszycki: “Przedmowa”, 5.

suffering feeds history⁹⁰³, but on the other, it allows history to deviate from linearity, causality and change.⁹⁰⁴

Despite looking back for patterns, *inteligenci*'s mission had a powerful creative component as well, focused on the building of a better and freer future. This explains the amalgam of two complementary views of the cycle in their discourses: on the one hand, the vicious circle inspired by repeated repression and the ensuing sense of loss and frustration for not being able to achieve the expected goals; on the other hand, the circle that ensures another opportunity to resume the battle against the winners. Thus, while in the first case the cycle is perceived as a curse that should be broken sooner or later, in the second it is the fountainhead of hope and of the conviction that the Poles' aspirations for independence and freedom will never be utterly defeated, that such mission will be taken up again because the democratic and pluralistic essentials of Polishness will be passed on generation after generation⁹⁰⁵.

Within a broader cyclic framework, we may sometimes spot glimmers of linearity and pioneering issues in oppositionists' narratives. For instance, speaking about late eighteenth-century Polish educators, Stefan Bratkowski argued that, despite the Commission of National Education was far from being the first ministry of its kind in Europe, it was nevertheless unique in terms of effort in adverse circumstances, for it achieved an outstanding regeneration of Polish cultural sphere in a decomposing State. He even termed these reformers "constructivists", more than a century before Jean Piaget and other scholars developed constructivism as an educational philosophy:

... for the first time in two centuries Poland took up the challenge of time in the sphere of positive facts; and not only did it catch up with Europe, but it surpassed it— with the best thought-out action, that had no parallel among its "parallels". It [the Commission, C.A.] excelled them intellectually and in organization, and contained yet another aspect: the Commission's activity was an argument in favor of our national *raison d'être*, Poland did not die, it did not fall completely into stagnation and decay, but was capable to undertake the organization of activities abreast of the times. Let's not say that this was "without precedent" in Europe: it was without precedent that a state, the living corpse that Poland was in the mid-eighteenth century, suddenly proved such an aptitude for regeneration! I deeply recommend finding out more about our "dark centuries" too (...) so that we learn to value the efforts and achievements of the people who, in truth, prepared the nation intellectually and morally to survive the later long night of partitions. If it hadn't been for these eighteenth-century Polish constructivists, who brought up the generation of Kościuszko, Staszic, Kołłątaj, Śniadecki, we would probably be just a geographical reminiscence.⁹⁰⁶

Bratkowski displayed before his readers a peculiar picture: enlightened Polish educators, to whom the Poles owed so much, were the *pioneers* of *renovation*; that is, they were the first to start over again after a period of degeneration, and in especially difficult circumstances, due to the corruption of nobility and the increasing patronage of the Russian empire over the country.

In his ninth thesis on the concept of history, Walter Benjamin perceived so-called "progress" as a kind of violent storm or hurricane with a lineal trajectory that thrust the

⁹⁰³ In the same vein, Adam Michnik wrote: "Let's remember that in Polish fate there are victories that were finally defeats and defeats that were finally victories, that were the basis to save national identity"; and Wojciech Giełżyński, whom we also mentioned in Chapter 2: "It is worth to reflect here, *notabene*, on the paradox stated by [the philosopher] Leszek Nowak about the fact that lost revolutions bring the most favorable and lasting results". Respectively: Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 84, my transl.; Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 154, my transl.

⁹⁰⁴ Domańska: "(Re)creative Myths...", 257-258.

⁹⁰⁵ See the last pages of Chapter 2, including the election posters dealing with Springtime renovation.

⁹⁰⁶ Bratkowski: "Walka...", 23, my transl., also 22 and 24.

angel of history forward while keeping its head turned back, watching helplessly how victims and ruins piled up without end in a sort of catastrophic whole:

Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt. Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen, worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm.⁹⁰⁷

Contrary to this lineal image, many Polish oppositionists perceived their own “wind from Paradise”, i.e. Communist ideology of “progress”, as a vicious circle. Since they valued and expected changes and improvements, a lineal view of history did not have such negative connotations for them: it meant a breakthrough, a rupture with the official order of the PRL regime, to overcome present-day situation, and therefore a success. The discourses on progress and linearity elaborated by Polish authorities were seen as the expression of the opposite, that is, of repeated mistakes and repression, of the ossification of a failed system, as a new defeat, but also the *same* defeat. Therefore, in the representation of People’s Poland everyday reality, opposition set up the circle of catastrophe against the line of “progress” provided by officialdom. Just like there was a struggle in the sphere of memory, symbols and commemorations⁹⁰⁸, Polish oppositionists fought with Communists as well over the real meaning of progress and hence the way to state it: the image of the line.

We can appreciate the official lineal view very well in the propaganda posters both of People’s Republic of Poland and of the Soviet space race (Figures 1 to 5)⁹⁰⁹, where it is very usual to see straight paths or lines, the poster characters gaze towards the horizon and technological progress or industrial development is suggested⁹¹⁰. While Figure 1 expressed the international alliance of the PRL with the Soviet Union in its determination to take the unobstructed highway to socialism (“A common path, a common target”), Figure 2 focused on a national alliance between Polish peasants and Polish workers (“The worker-peasant alliance is the source of the strength of People’s Poland. With the work produced by our hands the fatherland will grow and become stronger”). Figure 3, a Soviet poster featuring the classic socialist realist proletarian, suggested that, in terms of progress, the sky was the limit for Moscow (“Towards the Sun! Towards the stars!”). More recent in time, Figures 4 and 5 reinforced the idea of linearity when they warned that “There is no backing down in the road to socialist renewal!” (1981), or reminded that “breaking the rules, you delay our march towards socialism and you damage yourself and society”.

⁹⁰⁷ Benjamin in Mate: *Medianoche...*, 155-156.

⁹⁰⁸ See among others Kubik: *The Power of Symbols...*; Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja...*, esp. 353-395; Baczko: “Polska Solidarności...”; Meller: “Rola myślenia...”.

⁹⁰⁹ Figures 1, 2, 4 and 5: Courtesy of Karta Archiwum. Figure 3: <http://histmag.org/Podboj-kosmosu-na-radzieckich-plakatach-propagandowych-cz.-2-6436;8> (accessed on July 2nd, 2014).

⁹¹⁰ In any case, it must also be noted that the tension between the lineal and the cyclic understanding of time is typical of Communist philosophy of history too.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

On the other hand, we find among Polish opposition posters a very different way of understanding the evolution of Communism and the repressive nature of the Soviet Union and the governments under its control in the Eastern Bloc. In Figure 6 the hammer and sickle, symbols of Soviet ideology, turn into a Nazi swastika, evoking the totalitarian basis of Communist regimes⁹¹¹. On the other hand, in Figure 7, labelled “evolution”, a flag transforms into an axe, probably suggesting that the use of nationalism by Polish Communists’ did not manage to hide their criminal acts⁹¹².

⁹¹¹ The Spanish Communist dissident *par excellence*, Jorge Semprún (1923-2011), who in addition was a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, shared this opinion about the similarities between one kind of regime and the other, and went into much more detail in his reflections. He even considered the Soviet system worse because, at least, the terrible goal of Nazism was totally explicit, its followers put in practice what they preached —extermination, whereas in the Soviet case authorities promised something, seemingly very positive, and then did the opposite. This generated a very dangerous illusion that destroyed the market, one of the bases of society. As a result, it was much more difficult to recover and democratize former socialist societies than those dominated by Nazism. Semprún, Jorge: *Pensar en Europa*, Barcelona, Tusquets, 2006.

⁹¹² Both courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

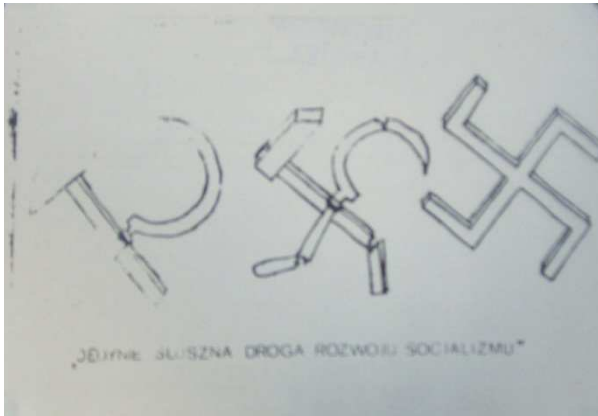


Figure 6

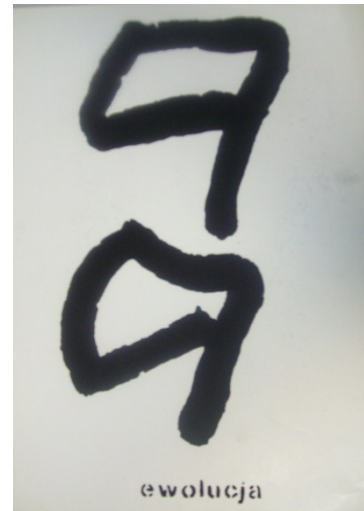


Figure 7

Going back to the combined images of the cyclic and the linear in Bratkowski's essay, "Walka na tysiąc rund" ["Fight for a thousand rounds"], the author couldn't help perceiving a continuity in Polish history since the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In spite of the obstacles put up by the partition system, enlightened Polish educators set up the basis of modern Polishness with their renovations and innovations. Perhaps partly due to his Marxist upbringing and convictions, as it happened with many other dissidents, Bratkowski did not lose his faith in progress: "The lack of statehood hindered and delayed the fulfillment of this task [the building of a modern Polish society, C.A.], (...) it suffered setbacks many times; however, despite the lack of freedom, it was never interrupted. And it progressed forward, which allows us to speak about continuity, about a historical process"⁹¹³.

These educators did not manage to see with their own eyes the good results they expected, but their existence was full of meaning because they believed that their legacy would outlive them and be profited later on, according to Bratkowski. Was he suggesting his opposition peers to adopt the same attitude today?

We have reasons to treat them like tragic heroes, because history paid them for their enormous lengthy effort only one hundred and fifty years later. But they probably weren't tragic heroes: a constructivist must believe that others will come after him, he is satisfied thinking that his work will not be wasted, that it will bear fruit. Constructivists can be beaten, but they cannot be defeated.⁹¹⁴

It was basically a question of perseverance and resistance, like a boxer in the ring, hence his allusions to Joe Jeanette and to boxing rounds (*rundy*)⁹¹⁵. Other *inteligenci*, like Jerzy Stępień⁹¹⁶, shared a similar view and referred explicitly to recent events:

⁹¹³ Bratkowski: "Walka...", 22, my transl.

⁹¹⁴ Bratkowski: "Walka...", 24, my transl.

⁹¹⁵ Bratkowski: "Walka...", 27-28.

⁹¹⁶ Jerzy Stępień (n. 1946) participated in the March 1968 protests at Warsaw University. He studied Law and was legal adviser during the 1980s of several organs in Kielce (a factory, health services and the diocesan curia, the latter when he was fired after his return from prison). As member and regional leader of *Solidarność* he was incarcerated in December 13th 1981 and spent several years in jail. There, he co-organized cultural life and founded two underground magazines for the internees. After his release, he collaborated with several underground periodicals and in 1985 he co-founded *Samorządna*

June and October '56, March '68, December '70, June '76 —these already are symbolic dates in the postwar history of Poland.

For one person they might mark the turning point of successive cycles in the process of alienation from the authorities. For another they might be the most intense examples of protest caused by life under intolerable conditions or protest attesting to the inauthenticity of authority. And that lily-livered authority found only one answer —coercion...

But it is possible to look at these dates in a different fashion ... as movements of experience, which in aggregate comprised the collective consciousness of Poles in 1980...

They created an image of struggle, the most beautiful of all —for Freedom...

Then the value of the suffering of all those wronged, of each lonely and individual sufferer, became clear.⁹¹⁷

Yet others did not think that historical development headed for a particular goal or followed a specific direction. Nevertheless, the resultant “shape” of time in their discourses resembled Bratkowski’s and Stępień’s in most cases. After 1989, for instance, Bronisław Geremek was inclined to see history as a spiral because, in his opinion, both the eternal cycle (related to conservative positions) and the accumulative linearity (linked to progressive views) were far too simple to explain reality by themselves:

... cette formule [‘l’histoire est un perpétuel recommencement’, C.A.] peut apparaître comme une manifestation de conservatisme, mais je ne crois pas qu’il soit bon d’opposer à cette approche-là une foi inébranlable dans le progrès de l’histoire. Une autre approche estime que l’histoire est une accumulation progressive, qu’elle a un sens, une direction, qu’elle est un escalier et qu’on le monte. Cela n’est pas vrai non plus.

[Philippe Sainteny] – C’est une spirale?

BG: Peut-être. Ç’a été d’ailleurs, dans l’histoire de l’histoire, une métaphore utilisée. Et je crois que c’est une bonne métaphore.⁹¹⁸

In any case, the commitment with the defeated should be the cornerstone of an engaged oppositionist, historian and historical actor, if positioned in Benjamin’s line. To stop the destructive line or the vicious circle of “progress”, the present must head elsewhere. The past could certainly act as a muse, but not as an oracle in this permanent struggle with the winners:

Either dealing with the past or with the future, in Walter Benjamin the opening of history is indissolubly linked with an ethical, social and political option in favor of the victims of oppression and of those who fight against it. The fate of that uncertain combat and the form it will take will be surely inspired or conditioned by the attempts of the past: but that will not make them less novel, and perfectly unpredictable.⁹¹⁹

Starting with the image of the vicious circle in opposition narratives, Tadeusz Łepkowski was probably one of the authors who most frequently referred to it. In his opinion, “Poland has been in a state of cyclic, permanent revolution for two hundred years. It is condemned to this in order to live”⁹²⁰.

The back then émigré oppositionist and co-founder of the quarterly journal *Aneks*, Aleksander Smolar, went into further detail when he described the three phases of the

Rzeczpospolita. He held several posts within *Solidarność* and participated in the Round Table conversations. He was elected senator in the elections of June 4th, 1989. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

⁹¹⁷ STĘPIEŃ, Jerzy: Introduction to *Radomski Czerwiec '76*, Radom, MKZ NSZZ “Solidarność” Ziemia Radomska, 1981, 1, quoted and translated by Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 46.

⁹¹⁸ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 147.

⁹¹⁹ Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 185, my transl.

⁹²⁰ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 68, my transl.

political cycle in Eastern European Communist regimes: In the first one, named “accumulation of society’s acquiescence”, the power, aware of its weaknesses, wanted to be in favor with the people and ensure their passivity. Authorities tried to conceal their violence behind liberal gestures, promises of renovation and democratization and quick material development. Once they gradually achieved society’s consent and became stronger, the previous balance of forces broke in people’s detriment and the phase of full domination began. Communist governments attempted then to substitute traditional spontaneous social networks for hierarchical links connecting each individual with the center of decision-making. Violence in all its forms increased; the acts, words and even thoughts of citizens were kept under surveillance. In response to this terror, most of society fell first into a kind of defensive lethargy; later, different forms of active and passive resistance emerged and some persons started to revolve against the rulers. Within power there also appeared different factions, and the main group of the apparatus felt its position and interests were endangered. The cycle concluded with a more or less long and harsh phase of crisis, repression and with subsequent promises of “renovation”.

However, Smolar admitted that the single country in the Eastern Bloc where that cycle was completely evident was Poland. The revolts of 1956, 1970 and 1976 were the result of the structural impossibility to balance for good two clashing realities: that of Communist authorities and that of society. The State fled from reality and dodged responsibilities, but at the same time aimed to monopolize power, which ironically made it responsible for almost everything⁹²¹.

With a much more pessimistic and ironic tinge, and in a fatalistic mood akin to Łepkowski’s, Stefan Kisielewski argued that exceptionality was already normality in Poland. He grasped this some time ago, that is why he did not worry too much lately or take national problems too seriously, he explained to his inquiring readers. For he worried in the Second World War, during Warsaw Uprising, with the mishaps of October 1956, with Gierek and with the Martial Law, and “at last I understood”, he said, “that the goblet of my worries was already full, that there was no room for more. And that nothing new takes place because all has taken place before, the repertoire has run out and what happens next will be the same that has happened since the 1950s, and so it is already normal”⁹²². The author, clearly frustrated, felt that since the rise to power of communists the Polish nation was being forced back into a cycle of “abnormal normality” time after time, and so many defeats were damaging and embittering the already overused pluck of senior generations.

Michnik, younger and more optimistic, was persuaded that opposition initiatives and social networks of dissent constituted “the conscious attempt to overcome Poland’s vicious circle, the cycle ‘from one ‘renewal’ to the next’, from an explosion to an uprising”⁹²³, and thus could do something very positive in this respect yet. The author expressed similar views in his famous article “The New Evolutionism” back in 1976⁹²⁴. The fact that he resorted to a term such as “evolutionism” is very telling, for it suggested the possibility of change and progress through the adaptation to the environment; in this case, the necessary adaptation of PRL powers to social changes and demands, or else, if referring to social dissent, the adaptation of the methods and tactics employed in its activism (rejection of violence, creation of independent organizations,

⁹²¹ Smolar: “Prosta i koło”, 94-109, esp. 94-97.

⁹²² KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Czemu się nie martwię? (felieton egocentryczny)”, in Kisielewski: *Lata poślacane...*, 679, my transl., also 678.

⁹²³ Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 327.

⁹²⁴ Michnik: “The New Evolutionism”.

combine open and underground work, etc.). In either case, the transformations should take place from the bottom to the top; that is, instead of trying to convince Communist authorities to change, Polish society had to evolve on its own first to be able to exert the necessary pressure on the government and hence compel it to change too. Jumping ahead to the late 1980s, Bronisław Geremek believed that the formation of *Solidarność* contributed in a decisive way to the Poles' definite *prise de conscience* of the socio-political vicious circle they were immersed in, as well as to its collapse:

Il ne faut pas juger de la situation polonaise dans l'optique du passé, de l'enchaînement hausse des prix-grèves-révolte populaire. Les Polonais savent désormais que ce type d'enchaînement ne provoque qu'un changement superficiel, le remplacement d'une équipe au pouvoir et quelques promesses de réformes. L'acte de naissance de Solidarité, la grève de 1980, était précisément une rupture de cette logique puisque, pour la première fois, on a pu obtenir un espace d'indépendance.⁹²⁵

But this process was on the move years before *Solidarność*. In Jonathan Schell's view, the Workers' Defense Committee already challenged the historical timings of the winners by behaving differently to what authorities expected. Instead of attempting to seize State power first and then carry out the measures they supported, KOR members decided to start directly with the latter, creating their own source of power beyond official organs and behaving very much as if they lived in a free country. By quoting the words of the worldwide renowned Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński, the collaborator of *The New Yorker* proved that the rules of the winners' time *continuum* in the PRL were not only evident for "outsiders" like him:

In *A Warsaw Diary*, Ryszard Kapuscinski writes, 'Here everything is based on a certain principle of asymmetrical verification: the system promises to prove itself *later* (announcing a general happiness that exists only in the future), but it demands that you prove yourself now, *today*, by demonstrating your loyalty, consent and diligence. You commit yourself to everything; the system to nothing'. The opposition worked exactly in the opposite way. It proved itself *today*, and let *later* take care of itself. In so doing, it offered a new approach to one of the most intractable problems of all political life: the endemic discrepancy between evil means and good ends in politics —between the brutal and mendacious methods commonly accepted as a necessity of politics and the noble visionary ends toward which these means are directed. In the direct action in society practiced by the opposition movement in Poland, means and ends were rolled into one. Every means was an end, and vice versa.⁹²⁶

The question of violence followed the same path: in Schell's opinion, the repeated and fruitless recourse to violence along Polish history had finally led present-day oppositionists to employ peaceful means first, and leave armed defense as a last resort⁹²⁷. This could be considered as "a revolution in revolution"⁹²⁸... and a revolution in the perception of time.

Another aspect of this "time revolution" implied reconsidering what was provisional in Polish life and what wasn't. According to Czesław Bielecki, the Communist system had managed to turn theoretically temporary situations in permanent ones (*najtrwalsza jest prowizorka*, "the provisional is what lasts longer", the saying

⁹²⁵ Interview to GEREMEK, Bronisław: "The Solidarity chapter is not closed", *Le Monde*, 1987. Also GEREMEK: "Total system failure", *The Guardian*, December 28th, 1990. Both in HU OSA 300-50-15 (Biographical Files of RFE Polish Unit), box 9.

⁹²⁶ Schell: "Introduction", in Michnik: *Letters from Prison...*, XXXII-XXXIII, italics in the original.

⁹²⁷ Schell: "Introduction", XXXVI-XXXVII; also Michnik: "Letter from the Gdańsk...", 86-89.

⁹²⁸ Schell: "Introduction", XVIII. See Chapter 2 for more on Solidarity's revolutionary character in particular.

went); the indefinite provisional character of values, means and goals had fueled social demoralization and, as a result, corruption, alcoholism, lack of discipline and apathy. Moreover, if opposition movements believed they were also provisional, i.e. that they were bound to disappear after governmental repression, they tended to carry out just short-term initiatives with a striking effect rather than taking a step further by developing long-term strategies. Instead, Bielecki betted for regarding as provisional what their great-great grandparents already deemed as such: the lack of complete national sovereignty.

The awareness of our provisional state inscribes our political activity in the pro-independence nineteenth-century tradition. It consisted in reminding constantly the next generations that, despite Poland is not sovereign, it was in the past and will be in the future. The provisional thus understood was based on the transcendence of political goals: in partition times each young generation was raised for a future free Poland regardless of the actual reality of this ultimate goal.⁹²⁹

Such suggestion epitomizes opposition's belief in some kind of progression in Polish history, which was nevertheless periodically disrupted by exogenous (some would also add endogenous) causes and spun for decades or even centuries like a whipping top. Bielecki saw time revolving over and over again, for instance, as a result of the struggles against the Soviet Union. In his opinion, with the workers' protests and the ensuing foundation of *NSZZ "Solidarność"*, the Poles were about to confront the Red Army for the fourth time, after the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, the Soviet invasion of 1939 based on the secret Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the USSR's repression or passivity towards the Home Army's fight against the Nazis in 1944⁹³⁰.

In spite of this, *Solidarność* somehow broke the mold as well. For Leszek Moczulski, it was simultaneously a social, political, democratic and national pro-independence revolution. It had great dimensions, not known hitherto, and proved itself more powerful than those of 1794, 1830 or 1905. In his last words during the trial against KPN, he compared the passage of time and recent opposition events to a wind. Such metaphor is almost the same that Benjamin used for his ninth Thesis; however, as explained further above, it had the opposite meaning: instead of being the storm of so-called "progress" powered by the "winners", it was tantamount to restoring the memory of the defeated and leaving Communism behind:

Is it strengthening? Is it slackening? It strengthens —and it is far from its zenith. One may think carefully about how many times in history immense forces make use of all their energy only to show in the end their immense weakness! Great powers, fabulous governments, brave generals —powerful beyond imagination— everything tumbles down like a house of cards when the wind of history blows...

I watch how this wind grows stronger.⁹³¹

The next poster, designed by Czesław Bielecki (Figure 8)⁹³², aimed to represent how repetition could eventually breed something new, original and unique like *Solidarność*. We are looking at the vital signs of Poland along the second half of the twentieth century, as understood by a member of democratic opposition. The peaks of the graphic, i.e. the moments when awareness was stronger, and hence the nation was more "alive", are labeled with the years 1944, 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976, when

⁹²⁹ Bielecki: "Prowizorium", 4-5, my transl.

⁹³⁰ Bielecki: "Umowa ...", 40.

⁹³¹ Moczulski in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 32, my transl.

⁹³² Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

uprisings, revolts and protests took place in the country. According to this design, in 1980 national consciousness experienced its highest peak since the foundation of the PRL, and the lifeline ceases to be a monotonous line from there on by transforming into the logo of *Solidarność*, as if an accumulative process had finally been completed despite previous setbacks and defeats. Or, as Adam Michnik put it, “the origins of these events [the foundation of *Solidarność*] were obvious: they lay in society’s long resistance, that was marked by the tragic dates of spurts of national revolt. These dates —1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, which today are being engraved on monuments of national memory, are the dates of the stations of the Polish Via Dolorosa”⁹³³.

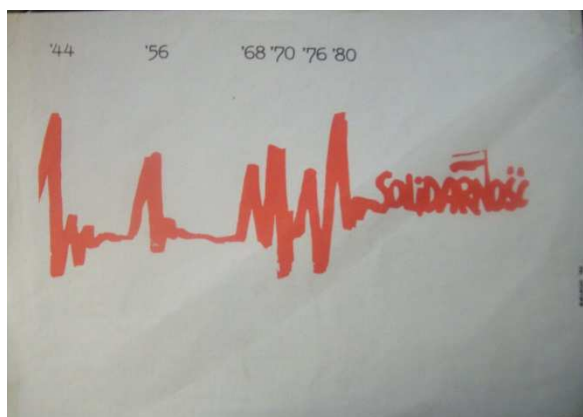


Figure 8

“...In the last ten years”, Michnik assured back in 1985, “everything in Poland has been without precedent”⁹³⁴. Jan Józef Lipski and Jerzy Holzer thought likewise, and devoted a few pages too to reflect on the novelty of opposition maxims and methods since the appearance of KOR, and especially of *Solidarność*, in comparison with the revolts of other Eastern Bloc countries and former Polish protests or reform attempts. For instance, while in Hungary 1956 people took control of the revolution in the streets and Communist power disintegrated, in Czechoslovakia 1968 the reforms came directly from the Party apparatus and looked for people’s support. In Poland, on the contrary, dissent movements tried to reprogram and organize social life so that Poles could put pressure effectively on the Communist government and achieve their demands. Thus, it was not just a question of increasing political autonomy or pluralism, but of finding new ways to attain such goals, like non-violence and the promotion of uncensored spaces for social action and intellectual debate, independent of any official organ. Unlike PSL in 1945-1947, *Solidarność* did not expect Western powers to provide help and press Moscow to respect the law and international treaties, nor did it hope to convince Soviet leaders about its socialist orthodoxy either, as the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) tried. It did not promote an internal regeneration of Communist structures, like revisionists wanted back in 1956, and mistrusted democratizing intentions of official trade unions and referenda for the workers similar to those promised in 1970⁹³⁵. The key element

⁹³³ Michnik: “A Year Has Passed”, 125, also “Maggots and Angels”, 188.

⁹³⁴ He referred to the creation and preservation of independent social spheres and organizations, but also to PRL forces’ multiple attempts to bring the latter down and the way that their violent pressure methods became more evident after December 1981 (eg. harsher attacks against the Church), as in the Toruń trial, in which four policemen were convicted for the murder of Rev. Jerzy Popiełuszko, supporter of Solidarity (1984). Michnik: “Letter from the Gdańsk...”, 81.

⁹³⁵ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 26-51, 350-351; Michnik: “Polska Wojna”, 4-5; Michnik: “A Year Has Passed”, 125-126; Lipski: *KOR...*, 3 and 5.

now was social emancipation, that is, the awareness that Polish society had to change to change the country instead of counting on the alleged *bona fide*, conciliatory aims or improvement wishes of other subject-agents that had very different, if not clashing, priorities.

Foreign media reporting on what was going on in Poland in the 1980s greatly contributed to reinforce and internationalize the feeling of uniqueness many Poles shared concerning August 1980 events. When pinning down what made the Polish opposition movement *par excellence* so especial, most journalists and political analysts provided the following definitions and features: a dissent blooming from within (not started up or led by émigré circles or foreign powers⁹³⁶), a self-limiting and worker-centered revolution (i.e. with a massive support but not aiming to overthrow Communist government), the alliance of lay dissidents with the Catholic Church, the search for internal freedom and democracy in opposition groups and, last but certainly not least, the general rejection of violence⁹³⁷. After 1989, the image of Polish opposition's uniqueness and pioneering character in the downfall of Eastern European Communist regimes acquired an official rank, as academic works⁹³⁸ and recent international commemorations have shown⁹³⁹.

Much earlier, in 1981, Piotr Gumper, the designer of the placard celebrating the first anniversary of *Solidarność* (Figure 9) already made it clear that it was the beginning of the end of the “red empire”⁹⁴⁰. Polishness, represented with the white and red colors of the national flag over the map of the country, was being recovered.

⁹³⁶ But of course encouraged and supported by both in many ways: Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*; ALBERSKA, Małgorzata: *Ośrodki emigracji polskiej wobec kryzysów politycznych w kraju (1956–1981)*, Wrocław, Oficyna Wydawnicza Arboretum, 2000; PIENKOS, Donald E.: *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish American Effort On Poland's Behalf, 1863-1991*, New York, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1991, esp. 152 and ff.

⁹³⁷ Two examples we have often referred to: Schell: “Introduction” and Howe: “The Polish Resistance”.

⁹³⁸ Zuzowski: *Political Dissent...*, 8, 10, chapter 9; Ekiert and Kubik: *Rebellious Civil Society...*, 6; Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 14.

⁹³⁹ For the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a gigantic row of dominoes was arranged in the German capital. Each domino piece carried the former official name of one of the countries of the Communist Bloc, the first of them being for the PRL. The chosen person to push this piece and make the rest of the row tumble down was Lech Wałęsa, as if to symbolize that *Solidarność*'s political and trade union struggle was the coup de grâce for Central and Eastern European socialist dictatorships. An anecdote recounted by FARALDO, José M.: “Lech Walesa. La deconstrucción del mito”, in MEES, Ludger and NUÑEZ SEIXAS, Xosé M. (coords.): *Nacidos para mandar. Liderazgo, política y poder. Perspectivas comparadas*. Madrid, Tecnos, 2012, 291.

It is very interesting to check how Poland's pioneering role and the chain reaction in the fall of Communism have become recurrent elements in Polish culture at all levels. For instance, in the autobiographical comic about her childhood in Communist Poland, Marzena Sowa represented the same idea through the image of a tree in Autumn. Its first leaf (PRL) fell... followed by all the rest. Sowa explained: “In our country it was a natural process. We were the first leaf”. SAVOIA, Sylvain and SOWA, Marzena: *Marzi. Nie ma wolności bez solidarności*, Warszawa, Egmont, 2011 (2009).

⁹⁴⁰ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.



Figure 9

Paradoxically, the freshness of Polish August 1980 was described by Michnik as a “miracle on the Vistula” (*cud nad Wisłą*), an old expression originally referring to the Polish army’s unexpected and decisive victory against the Red Army in the battle of Warsaw (August 12th-25th, 1920) during the Polish-Soviet War (February 1919-March 1921). The connection between these two Augusts was stated graphically by *Solidarność*’s supporters (Figure 10)⁹⁴¹; however, the battle waged by oppositionists was a peaceful, long-distance endurance race that had resisted every governmental attack, including the Martial Law, which made it ever more original and miraculous⁹⁴².



Figure 10

⁹⁴¹ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

⁹⁴² Michnik: “Letter from the Gdańsk...”, 77-79, 86. About the parallel unprecedented character and danger of the Martial Law: Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 43; Michnik: “Polska Wojna”, 11; Pomian: “Robotnicy i sekretarze”, 93.

However, back in the night when the Martial Law was established, the attitude and perspectives among oppositionists were certainly not so confident or hopeful. Waldemar Kuczyński (n. 1939)⁹⁴³ remembered later on that, in the moment he was being arrested, he perceived that the course of time was being altered once again and that they were being forced back into a vicious circle, the long-lasting triumph of a legalized *Solidarność* becoming quite unexpectedly a new “past-that-didn’t-take-place”:

When the *Milicja* seized me by the arms, I felt with painful clearness that time split in two, that right before what was the present and could apparently be the future only a second ago, not only mine, but of the whole country, a grille slammed shut without return, and the new reality opening before us consisted of high walls, barbed wire, handcuffs, guards, *ubowcy*⁹⁴⁴... I felt then the continuity of the struggle and the continuity of the repression... The continuity of the struggle and the repression, and perhaps stagnation, the ossification of this system that cannot do without terror, and the permanent ineffectiveness of the fight to make more human and freer everything in which we live in.⁹⁴⁵

The endless effort, Sisyphus rolling down the hill and pushing the rock back up all over again... The Poles had not managed to escape the cyclic disaster of the myth enclosed in their historical consciousness since partition times. Rather than resorting to the motifs of Homer’s Greece, the author of the next placards (Figures 11 and 12)⁹⁴⁶ drew inspiration from the art of the Pre-Columbian era to recreate the flavor of an ancient mythical tale, apparently taking us back to a “time without time” (in Eliade’s line) but, simultaneously, recording the struggle of dissent movements and life in the PRL system as a graphic opposition chronicle of the present, with a view to its preservation. This time, Gutenberg prevented Polish oppositionists from having to engrave their story in stone. In the first picture, a miner (given that opposition was working in the underground since the Martial Law) hits with his pick the neck of a kind of snake-god that surrounds him, conveying a circle that someone attempts to break. The second poster, also with a circular shape, depicts the beast of Communist dictatorship sat on a tank (the tanks that occupied the streets the night of December 12th-13th, 1981) being dragged around by a row of slaves, but arriving nowhere.

⁹⁴³ One of the most active members of Warsaw University’s critical circles since the 1960s, Waldemar Kuczyński held several specialized posts as an economist in factories. He belonged to TKN and became part of *Solidarność* since August 1980, where he acted as an adviser in various fields, participated in protests and negotiations. In June 1981 he was appointed chief editor of the weekly *Tygodnik Solidarność*. Arrested in December 13th 1981, in August 1982 he emigrated to Paris, where he lived until 1989. Along these decades of oppositionist activity, he published many articles dealing with politics and economy in the main émigré and *drugi obieg* periodicals. After his return to Poland he became a close collaborator of the first non-Communist Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 2.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ubowcy* literally means “members of the Security Office (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB)”. The UB was the common name for the security services of the State in the Stalinist period. Later on, it was also used as the equivalent of the Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB), i.e. the Security Service of the Ministry of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which replaced the UB since 1956. Its workers were called *esbecy*.

⁹⁴⁵ Quoted in Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 348, my transl.

⁹⁴⁶ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.



Figure 11



Figure 12

In Leszek Moczulski's eyes, the PRL had meant stepping back into the past for the Poles, the return to a half-sovereign or protectorate situation under the auspices of Russia, like the reign of King Stanisław August, Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw or Congress Poland⁹⁴⁷. In the same fashion, Michnik compared general Jaruzelski's "self-invasion" of Poland (with the USSR's collusion) to the Targowica Confederation, an episode which is tantamount to high treason in Polish historical tradition. But both Jaruzelski and the Soviet Union were wrong, according to him, because they presupposed an ultimate violent outcome of opposition and social protests. By misjudging and mistrusting their own society, the army and the Party had actually betrayed the nation:

The Martial Law decree should remind society about Targowica, the secular symbol of national infamy. The ghost of a Russian invasion, in case Jaruzelski had failed, prejudged Polish society's position. I risk this hypothesis because I am persuaded that there is still an argument in favor of the fact that there are many rational and sensible thinkers in this romantic nation, an argument in favor of the fact that Poles do not only know how to fight, but how to think too.⁹⁴⁸

Despite Polish society had rejected violence and was organizing itself peacefully, Communist powers wanted to preserve their position and perceived any autonomous alternative as a potential threat to their monopoly. Thus, their reaction was a consequence of past political mentalities and behaviors, based on the belief that "it takes one to know one"; that is, on the idea that, just like Communist rulers themselves were not trustworthy, critical Poles were not to be trusted either. Though oppositionists had also made pretty much the same mistakes as before (eg. becoming too self-confident and daring, going to extremes, not foreseeing upcoming repression), *inteligenci* wanted to instil in people the notion that, in general, after the *Solidarność* experience Polish citizens had evolved and left Communist rulers behind, revolving alone in their completely outdated time *continuum*.

"We were turning around in a circle of fossilized stereotypes", of romantic *versus* positivistic nineteenth-century attitudes fueled by official media, Kersten thought⁹⁴⁹. But times had changed —the "defeated" had changed, and it was senseless to oppose oversimplified traditions that only put together in all their complexity and variety could provide a realistic picture of Polish modern political thought, where there was still much

⁹⁴⁷ Moczulski in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 30. In the same line, we have already mentioned in Chapter 3 how Czesław Bielecki compared Jaruzelski with the Grand Duke of Russia Constantine Pavlovich.

⁹⁴⁸ Michnik: "Polska Wojna", 9, my transl.

⁹⁴⁹ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 358, my transl.

room left for innovation and real progress. Democratic opposition had taught people how to live in freedom and *Solidarność* provided them experience in political struggle, and that would not be easily forgotten. Forty months after the Martial Law, Michnik assured, the foundations of an independent civil society were still standing and moving forward: “Under the conditions of the Leading System, this is an unprecedented phenomenon. Instead of resembling a communist system after victorious pacification, this situation resembles a democracy after a military *coup d’état*. The Poles have traveled a great distance on their journey from totalitarianism to democracy”⁹⁵⁰.

Given this, old 1944 tactics of the Communist government to divide and terrorize Polish society would not be effective anymore, in Bielecki’s opinion. Many Poles had lost fear and gained a high level of social consciousness, so that they were not readily manipulated. The plot of dissent that had taken shape in the 1970s and bloomed in the 1980s escaped official control “because it was living history, not the accomplishment of political programs following a plan designed from above”⁹⁵¹.

The winners’ time *continuum*, its sterility and resistance to change, had been defeated by the drive of history itself, a fertile history made up of the seeds of past and present generations fighting for freedom. Because “even in the Soviet Bloc countries history does not stand still”, Krzysztof Pomian pointed out⁹⁵²; something which was also borne in mind by arrested oppositionists like Tadeusz Stański, who defied the Court judging him by asserting that “we [the nation, C.A.] are already in another epoch. A historical process has already begun, history cannot be stopped with bars, prison sentences or with our death”⁹⁵³. Or like Władysław Bartoszewski, incarcerated in the first and darkest days of the Martial Law period: “Among lakes and forests, in a relative comfort, we were locked up⁹⁵⁴ with our hopes and dreams. But we knew one thing: history goes forward. It does not remain motionless despite the evident blow. Our country had undergone in its history much more hopeless situations”⁹⁵⁵.

In harmony with Stański’s and Bartoszewski’s words, the following placard described 1982 precisely as a “year of hopes” (*rok nadziei*) (Figure 13)⁹⁵⁶. Its most outstanding detail is the broken line of the numeral “8”, which resembles a couple of broken chain links, in clear allusion to freedom. On the other hand, if such figure is seen horizontally, it also reminds of the mathematic symbol representing infinity (∞).

Therefore, the picture may be additionally interpreted in terms of time perception: an infinite periodical pattern had been broken in Polish history. Despite the apparent defeat of opposition due to the Martial Law and the army’s takeover of the government, this was not just another failure. The formation and development of *Solidarność* had stirred something deep down in Polish society that permitted to alter the course of a history which, up until then, seemed doomed to repeat over and over again. Hopes were no longer the exclusive property of those who had been defeated in previous occasions, waiting to be vindicated and recovered from oblivion through remembrance. Now they also belonged to those who had not been completely crushed, who had opened new ways that, sooner or later, they intended to resume personally, though with more

⁹⁵⁰ Michnik: “Letter from the Gdańsk...”, 81, also 85-86; Król: “Realistyczna...”, 1-2; Schell: “Introduction”, XVIII.

⁹⁵¹ Bielecki: “Program...”, 72, my transl.; Bielecki, “Nasza wielka...”, 42; Bielecki, “Ciąg dalszy...”, 49.

⁹⁵² Pomian: “Robotnicy i sekretarze”, 93, my transl.

⁹⁵³ Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 20, my transl.

⁹⁵⁴ Bartoszewski refers to the village of Jaworze, in Western Pomerania. Nearby there was an airport and a military base for Polish army’s air forces, as well as a rest home for soldiers, which was used as an internment camp for oppositionists during Martial Law times.

⁹⁵⁵ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 7, my transl.

⁹⁵⁶ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

striving and barriers than they had thought in the first place. It is the hope in a future which is no longer perceived as written beforehand. The vicious circle was blown to pieces: thanks to the effort of all, what seemed endless had been put to an end.



Figure 13

Interestingly, many oppositionists highlighted that such a crucial (and lineal) breakthrough took place thanks to previous renewals and the periodic transmission of knowledge. In this sense, Wojciech Giełżyński expressed his liking for a cyclic or spiral-like view of time in response to an article written by Damian Kalbarczyk on the irreconcilable aims of Catholicism and left-winged trends, such as Edward Abramowski's⁹⁵⁷:

Kalbarczyk writes, in an authoritarian way, that Abramowski's political conceptions belong to the past and that it doesn't make sense to turn to them, because it is not worth to build a legend. In this aspect I am more inclined towards the Hindu perception of time as a circle, and not as an endless straight line; it has occurred more than once that different trends of human thought return after centuries in a new, more mature form—and have been politically very prolific.⁹⁵⁸

The journalist was surprised that a Catholic author like Kalbarczyk did not understand the role played by legends and utopias in the national psyche (like to stand misfortune, for example)⁹⁵⁹, and was convinced that Abramowski's political conceptions belonged to the present and the future rather than to the past⁹⁶⁰. Such a comment ratifies one of the ideas previously suggested in our research: that at least part of opposition *inteligenci* were aware of the importance that myths and legends had for Polish society and were willing to imbibe them (besides placing themselves within them) and simultaneously push them in a new direction, intertwining tradition and innovation or, put in another way, revisiting tradition in an innovative fashion. That was exactly Michnik's proposal regarding earlier clandestine resistance:

⁹⁵⁷ Published in *Znak*, no. 359, October 1984.

⁹⁵⁸ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 154, my transl.

⁹⁵⁹ Similar ideas for the Hungarian case can be found in MOLNÁR, Miklos: "Obecność historii", in 1956. *W dwadzieścia lat...*

⁹⁶⁰ Giełżyński: *Edward Abramowski...*, 155.

Solidarity was the first mass movement in our history that lasted for many months, that struck deep roots in Polish hearts and minds, in work places and private homes. This permits one to believe that the movement of resistance against WRONa has a real base, that the underground has a chance of surviving future police actions. This chance stems from the Solidarity tradition and from the gains won by the pre-August democratic opposition. In addition, the entire body of experience of the nineteenth and twentieth-century underground activities serves today as a book of knowledge about the values and methods of illegal resistance. This book must be reread, so that we can adapt old examples to new situations.

Many different accusations have been made against the Poles over their stormy history, but no one could ever say that they know nothing about conspiracy.⁹⁶¹

In the Czechoslovakian context, Václav Havel valued as much as Polish oppositionists the mysterious and almost instinctive mechanism that enabled forthcoming generations to unbury their ancestors' "arms" (their principles, their experience) and bring a long-forgotten (and most times lost) struggle back to life through reinterpretation, sprouting always at the suitable moment (*kairos*), like the thistles envisaged by Ted Hughes: "... the humanistic and democratic traditions, about which there had been so much idle talk, did indeed slumber in the unconsciousness of our nations and ethnic minorities, and were inconspicuously passed from one generation to another so that each of us could discover them at the right time and transform them into deeds"⁹⁶².

But maybe such mechanism was not so mysterious or mechanical after all: rather, it all had to do with intellectuals' will and self-perception. By appropriating the custody and evaluation of national (and especially immaterial) heritage, opposition *inteligencja* consciously performed a "tiger's leap into the past" in order to become the tacitly authorized interpreter of former knowledge and, at the same time, its transmission belt. Focusing specifically on recent events, and expressing himself in similar terms to Bielecki, Jan Józef Lipski believed that KOR's contribution to Polish society had been passed on to *Solidarność*, and still throbbed within it:

When this chapter of the history of KOR comes to an end⁹⁶³, a great chapter in the biographies of each of us will also come to a close. KOR is already history, although it is living history, which contributes to the formation of the present and the future. But Solidarity, for which we began working in the corridors of the courtroom during the first Ursus trial on July 17, 1976, is not just the past, not just history. I believe that Solidarity is not only a present reality but also a future fact. Perhaps this will not be exactly the future for which we worked in KOR, not independence and democracy right away, but in any case, some new piece of the road leading towards these final goals.⁹⁶⁴

The key in Polish intellectuals' mission was to conceive history not as something dead and buried, but as something actual, alive, and, most importantly, as an inherent quality or right of each individual, therefore shared within society (historicity). By erasing the fictitious and misleading barriers separating past, present and future, oppositionists tried to demonstrate that history was being written and rewritten ceaselessly, and that the Polish nation should have the leading voice (or voices) in its modification and plotting from then on. While living in a dictatorial system, it was fundamental to restore in people the senses of hope and responsibility to change things,

⁹⁶¹ Michnik: "On Resistance...", 51.

⁹⁶² HAVEL, Václav: "A New Year's Address to the Nation. Prague, January I, 1990", in Havel: *The Art...*, 6.

⁹⁶³ He refers to the trial against KOR that finally didn't take place. The charges against some of its members for trying to overthrow the government by force lasted from 1981 until the amnesty of 1984.

⁹⁶⁴ Lipski: *KOR...*, 458.

but the task was not over once democracy was achieved; principles had to be continuously remembered, defended and improved afresh precisely to keep them alive, as Michnik warned: “Each act of resistance saves a portion of liberty and preserves the values without which a nation cannot survive. Each act of resistance is a step towards democratic socialism which should be more than just an institutional and legal structure: it should be a community of free men, *a real community, which is re-created anew each day*”⁹⁶⁵. “The road that I choose and seek to follow”, he would insist not very long after, “while fearing the police, malicious gossip, and my own conscience, is a road on which, my teacher Słomkowski⁹⁶⁶ taught me, ‘there are no final victories, yet also no final defeats’”⁹⁶⁷.

The cycle also conveys the expectation of an eventual success in face of a present defeat like the Martial Law one. The fact that in the next picture (Figure 14)⁹⁶⁸ Lech Wałęsa was portrayed as Władysław Anders⁹⁶⁹ suggests that an actual opposition leader is taking the place of a past defeated and exiled one and, simultaneously, that the exodus of “defeated” are “returning” and being avenged through him. So, in Polish opposition’s view, it is not just Wałęsa or *Solidarność*, but the “army” of past national victims of Communism who back them what makes the actual representative of the “winners”, general Jaruzelski, hide under the sheets and tremble with fear, with his characteristic dark glasses lying on the bedside table. The difference is that, probably unlike Anders, Wałęsa does not clutch an arm; instead, he is holding up his hand making the victory sign⁹⁷⁰. Today’s fight, possibly the ultimate and definitely victorious in such an adverse context, with such an uneven balance of power (for, as Michnik reminded, the battle for

⁹⁶⁵ Michnik: “The New Evolutionism”, 277, my italics.

⁹⁶⁶ Antoni Słomkowski (1895-1976) was a prominent poet, writer, publicist and theater critic, and a dissident in Communist times. After returning to Poland in 1951 (he lived in emigration in London since 1940) he became increasingly disenchanted with PRL regime; finally, in 1956 he became the leader of the Polish Writers’ Union (Związek Polskich Literatów, ZPL), which was founded both by independent writers and those disappointed with the system. He focused his criticism and protests against Communist government on the lack of freedom of expression and citizens’ rights, and gathered around him an important circle of critical thinkers and writers. He was accused of being one of the main supporters of March 1968 students’ protests, suffered anti-Semitic attacks, his books were banned and his name was erased from textbooks and scholarly programs. In 1973 he employed Adam Michnik as his personal secretary, which provided the latter with a certain protection against repression. He died as a consequence of a car accident; his funeral in Warsaw was attended by many representatives of different opposition movements and turned into a public tribute to his personal, professional and opposition career. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 3.

⁹⁶⁷ Michnik: *The Church...*, 214.

⁹⁶⁸ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

⁹⁶⁹ Władysław Anders (1892-1970) was a very well-known Polish anticommunist general and a politician both in the Second Republic period and in the government-in-exile in London. After the First World War he joined Polish Army’s cavalry as a commanding officer in the 15th Poznań Uhlan Regiment and fought in the Polish-Soviet War. In the outbreak of World War II he commanded the cavalry brigade that confronted the Nazi invasion, but Poland’s mounted troops were no match for the modern, larger and better equipped *Wehrmacht*. Forced to retreat eastwards, he was imprisoned and tortured by Soviet forces, but in Summer 1941 was released with a view to forming a Polish Army from former prisoners of war and deportees that would fight alongside the USSR. However, due to ideological clashes with the Red Army, material shortages and the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, a year later Stalin agreed to evacuate part of these Polish Armed Forces in the East, known as Anders’ Army. This way, Anders led his men and thousands of Polish civilians released from prisons and gulags away from the German-Soviet war through the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Palestine), where he formed the Second Polish Corps, joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West and fought alongside the Western Allies, playing a key role in the seizure of Monte Cassino (January-May 1944). He was deprived of his citizenship and military rank by the new Polish communist government in 1946 and remained in Great Britain until his death.

⁹⁷⁰ It became typical in Polish opposition’s iconography since *Solidarność* was created and Wałęsa used it.

democracy actually never ends), is taking place without violence, and not in a military but in a civilian context.



Figure 14

The attempts to overcome had been many, and so had repression waves. However, after each defeat the total toll swelled, as well as the processes of remembrance, so that it was increasingly harder for the “winners” to stifle or damage Polish humanistic and democratic values (if they ever had, more than one oppositionist would say), until there came a time when the tables would be turned. Intellectual opposition networks of the mid-1970s felt they had taken up the secular fight of the fallen for freedom, national independence and democracy. Thinking about the forthcoming lawsuit against the members of the Workers’ Defense Committee, in 1982 Lipski considered that

This will be a battle for truth, for the memory of KOR. I do not believe that this memory can be hurt by a trial ordered by the heirs of those who once murdered without trials, or handed down draconian verdicts against the soldiers of the Home Army and the Peasant Battalions, and against the civilian authorities of the Underground Polish State of World War II, the heroes of the struggle of the Polish nation for independence on all fronts and in all areas of life. Later, during a long series of political trials, those who had fought for the same thing as their predecessors, though no longer in an atmosphere of mortal terror, were judged and made to pay a not insignificant price for the service they rendered to Poland and to its culture.⁹⁷¹

By regarding their case and failures in a broader time perspective, and thus in accordance with the cycles of Polish history, oppositionists were persuaded that their defeats would never be complete, just lost frays in an ongoing long-term campaign which they expected to finally win. Czesław Bielecki and Tadeusz Stański expressed this idea in similar terms:

The supporters of the first answer [i.e. those who believed that *Solidarność* was a trade union in a narrow sense, C.A.] think that December 13th was the ultimate frustration of our hopes, the supporters of the second [answer, believing that *Solidarność* was an authentic democratic and pro-independence movement, C.A.] that the 16 months of our ‘prisoner camp freedom’ should be regarded as a big step towards independence. For those who thought that the fight began in 1980,

⁹⁷¹ Lipski: *KOR...*, 457. During KPN’s trial, Tadeusz Stański went further back in time when he self-identified with previous repressed nineteenth-century intellectuals and conspirators. See Chapter 1. Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 10.

December 13th is a lost war. However, for those who thought that the war against the nation began in 1944, it is just a lost battle within the next campaign.⁹⁷²

The nation, members of the High Court, does not surrender. The nation loses battles, but not wars. We have lost during two hundred years. After some time rebuilding our biological and intellectual potential, we jump back to action. (...) Ultimately, if it is not us, if it's not today's generation, the next one will achieve our common goal: the Recovery of Independence and the building of a Free Poland.

Members of the High Court: the nation can never lose. During almost two hundred years we have been jailed, sentenced to hard labor, confined in Nazi concentration camps, in Stalinist camps, in the Security Office's prisons —and, after some time, we stand back up again. And so it will be till victory. Such is the nation's need, such is our obligation, such is our duty. The nation will never surrender.⁹⁷³

While Lipski (born in 1926) actually lived through the experiences he recounted, in the words of Stański (born in 1948) we spot a strong —and convenient— feeling of empathy towards past victims, as his use of “we” shows. For just like the return of commander Wałęsa-Anders' “remembrance army” frightened Jaruzelski in the cartoon of Figure 14, opposition *inteligencja* strengthened its moral position and became an active part of Poland's (ongoing) history if “backed” by former national suffering.

On the other hand, the unshakeable faith in a final or at least long-lasting rebirth, and the wish to personally witness that moment, prevailed in many opposition discourses. Together with the previous examples, Tadeusz Łepkowski was probably one of the *inteligenci* who best expressed this trust in the triumph of another kind of progress:

For almost two hundred years we have suffered enormous losses. The threat of total extermination hung above us. The proof of Polish society's great maturity and ability to read its own history is the fact that, without giving up the fight for its rights, it did everything in its power to make the 1980 revolution a bloodless one. Blood was nevertheless shed after December 13, 1980, when the government, wishing to suffocate the pro-freedom uprising of the Poles, began —as in 1956 and 1970— shooting workers.

The Poles are a revolutionary nation, but revolution must not be tantamount to victims and holocaust. Bravery should be coupled with cautiousness. The fight for an Independent and Fair [Poland] is ongoing. It is difficult to tell what the future will bring. Hard times might await us. However, we must walk towards a real utopia, march and fall, stand up and walk towards the light again. No night, even the darkest, nor the one lit by moonlight, lasts forever.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷² Bielecki, “Nasza wielka...”, 43, my transl.

⁹⁷³ Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 10, my transl., also 20 and Moczulski in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 32.

⁹⁷⁴ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 69, my transl. Also Michnik: “Why You Are Not Signing...”, 14-15; Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 20.

B) Historical awareness and historicization of present time (I)

B.1) Jetztzeit, hope and helplessness

History, history,
Art thou a landlady,
That for you die,
That for you die
Beautiful young peasants.

Suites, courtiers,
noise peacock feathers!
Suites, courtiers, noise!

History, history
Dark discothèque,
You don't allow people or centuries
To catch up their breath. (...)

History, history
You, our stepmother,
How little you give us
Except for the Lord's Prayer. (...)

History, history
Art thou a snare,
We make our way to the stage,
But it is still the cloakroom. (...)

History, history
So many dreams within you,
You use to be written
By liars and whippersnappers.

History, history
You, voracious myth,
What does it mean to you
One single human life?

Suites, courtiers, noise!

Agnieszka Osiecka: *Orszaki, dworaki*

Overnight, very
Whitely, discreetly,
Very quietly

Our toes, our noses
Take hold on the loam,
Acquire the air.

Nobody sees us,
Stops us, betrays us;
The small grains make room.

Soft fists insist on
Heaving the needles,
The leafy bedding,

Even the paving.
Our hammers, our rams,
Earless and eyeless,

Perfectly voiceless,
Widen the crannies,
Shoulder through holes. We

Diet on water,
On crumbs of shadow,
Bland-mannered, asking

Little or nothing.
So many of us!
So many of us!

We are shelves, we are
Tables, we are meek,
We are edible,

Nudgers and shovers
In spite of ourselves.
Our kind multiplies:

We shall by morning
Inherit the earth.
Our foot's in the door.

Sylvia Plath: *Mushrooms*

With the above-mentioned qualification concerning the “shape” of time⁹⁷⁵, the “revolution” that Polish opposition intellectuals meant to carry out resembled

⁹⁷⁵ Osiecka's verses quoted below are my own translation. Original text: Historio, historio,/ cóżeś ty za pani,/ że dla ciebie giną,/ że dla ciebie giną/ chłopcy malowani.// Orszaki, dworaki,/ szum pawich piór!/ Orszaki, dworaki, szum!// Historio, historio,/ czarna dyskoteko,/ nie pozwalasz wytchnąć/ ludziom ani wiekom.// (...) Historio, historio,/ ty macocho nasza,/ tak nam dałaś mało/ oprócz Ojczy Nasza.// (...) Historio, historio,/ cóżeś ty za matnia,/ pchamy się na scenę,/ a to jeszcze szatnia.// (...) Historio, historio,/

considerably to Walter Benjamin's notion of the term, at least as understood by the sociologist and philosopher Michael Löwy: "Unlike common evolutionist Marxism—that may as well include certain writings of Marx and Engels themselves—, Benjamin does not conceive revolution as the 'natural' or 'inevitable' result of economic and technical progress (...) but as the interruption of a historical evolution leading to catastrophe"⁹⁷⁶. In order to pull the emergency brake, a conscious victim of history and potential subject-agent should "not consider time as a mere passage but as something *balanced* and *in suspense*. (...) The equilibrium Benjamin refers to is that between the memory of the defeated and the actual need of liberation, between the demands of the past and the needs of the present", whereas "in suspense" involves the possibility of stopping unlimited progress (i.e. unlimited war and barbarity)⁹⁷⁷ by shaking off conformism and the idea of inevitability.

Therefore, the fate of a given group—the Polish nation as a whole, or pro-democratic opposition movements and supporters in this case, is undecided, unwritten. Such conviction generated contradictory feelings. In *inteligenci's* texts, the hope of being able to change socio-political life for themselves mingled with the fear produced by the well-founded sense of risk and peril that changing those things could imply in a system like the PRL. It was precisely during *Jetztzeit*, when everything was up in the air, when the most transcendental questions about the meaning of Polishness were posed:

This period [the nineteenth century and Warsaw Uprising, C.A.] bequeaths to us probably the most difficult of queries. The query about the sense of being a Pole. I acknowledge that I have frequently thought about this. Always with fear. (...) This question always returns—understandably—in times of national tensions, in moments when the atmosphere in Poland is charged with danger, but also with expectation. Today is one of those moments. Our future is full of question marks, but also of signs of hope. We look at the future with fear, but nevertheless with faith, hope and love as well. (...)

(...) In my view, the message of romantics was a reminder about the impossibility of conceiving and understanding the sense of being a Pole without understanding the sense of the Cross. (...) Without the Cross, which is the symbol of suffering, but also the symbol of Good News.⁹⁷⁸

When standing at the crossroads of history, the dread of making a wrong turn or the belief that, whichever path was chosen, one would end up in the same place as before is unsurprising. It was less frequent for democratic oppositionists, however, to perceive their situation in a predominantly pessimistic or even impotent mood, or to display their frailness and vulnerability in an open way. But it did occasionally happen.

A recurrent topic in modern Russian literature, the insignificance of the ordinary individual in the face of inhumanly supreme natural and historical forces was masterly depicted by Alexandr Pushkin in his poem *The Bronze Horseman: A Petersburg Tale* (1833), when, a year after the apocalyptic deluge that destroyed his life, poor suffering and maddened Evgenii sees how Falconet's equestrian statue of Peter the Great is brought to life and pursues him until his death⁹⁷⁹. In our case, such sense of utter powerlessness and lack of control may be considered the other face of Polish critical intellectuals' reflections on time, and we will explore it primarily through some of Stefan Kisielewski's *feliety*.

tylę w tobie marzeń,/ często ciebie piszą,/ kłamcy i gówniarze.// (...) Historio, historio, ty żarłoczny micie, co dla ciebie znaczy jedno ludzkie życie?// Orszaki, dworaki, szum!

⁹⁷⁶ Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 24, my transl.

⁹⁷⁷ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 252, my transl., 253 and 259.

⁹⁷⁸ Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe...", 84, my transl.

⁹⁷⁹ Billington: *El icono...*, 477.

Considered one of the most renowned Polish publicists of his time, the sweet pen name of Kisielewski was ironically misleading, judging by the bitter twist of his reflections⁹⁸⁰. Critical and pessimistic, former neopositivist and member of the *Sejm* in the branch of Znak (1957-1965), deeply individualistic and very concerned about economic issues (given his support of a liberal, capitalist market economy), the author's personality and viewpoint was probably one of the most exceptional within opposition circles⁹⁸¹. A senior and well-established author in our time scope, he assumed his perpetual personal debacle and intoned the "blues of defeatism" in his fixed column of *Tygodnik Powszechny* ever more loudly when any of his friends tried to talk him out of it.

For instance, he confided to his readers that the writer and historian Adam Mauersberger believed that, because they had lived through so many socio-political changes and difficult experiences, people of their generation (born before 1914) possessed a greater and better understanding of the world, and therefore had more chances of influencing on future events. Kisiel, however, considered that hope obstructed the objective assessment of present circumstances⁹⁸², "that the past does not count, and that never up until then the key to master the future has been found in that past, even if researched most accurately". Each period, he insistently asserted, had its own particular mystery, its riddle, and once it was solved it gave way to a new one⁹⁸³. In his view, politics was a mixture of bewilderment, disinformation, accidents, circumstances and improvisation. But politicians had the power to *do* something, at least apparently, whereas intellectuals, despite all their knowledge (or perhaps because of it), did not:

... I do not regard too highly the brains of Napoleon or Mao Zedong; however, it is impossible not to admit that they have done more than wise Mauersberger or me. But did they necessarily have to do it, or would have things been done without them equally, or maybe even better? (...) I am skeptical about knowledge and wisdom: specialists and experts have never ruled the world, and to bear in mind all the data and elements does not lead to great decisions, but rather to indolence.⁹⁸⁴

In the case of Pushkin's poem, the catastrophes experienced by Evgenii were beyond his understanding and control. For Polish intellectuals, however, the main problem would be an excess of understanding of situations beyond their control. Nevertheless, in Kisiel's opinion such knowledge was actually the modern version of the Socratic paradox, so that instead of providing security or determination, it finally made *inteligencja* understand how little there was to be understood (especially after a lifetime), producing a discouraging and paralyzing effect. But politicians or great military leaders, who thought less and did more, were probably also dispensable, the course of history hardly being disturbed had they not existed. Very intellectual-wise, Kisiel thus reflected on the issue of posterity, uncertainty and the ultimate futility of human actions. Sometimes, possibly with the scheme of Greek tragedy in mind, he

⁹⁸⁰ Kisielewski's pen name in *Tygodnik Powszechny* was the abbreviation of his surname, "kisiel", which means "jelly" in Polish.

⁹⁸¹ Some of the names of his fixed column of *Tygodnik Powszechny* in the 1970s and 1980s are telling in this sense: Bez dogmatu (Without dogmas), Widziane inaczej (Seen Otherwise), Sam sobie sterem... (I am the rudder, quoting Adam Mickiewicz's "Ode to youth"). Also *Testament Kisiela...*, 45, conv. date 30-VIII-1990; *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

⁹⁸² He used the saying "Nadzieja matka głupich", literally "Hope is the mother of fools".

⁹⁸³ KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: "Oj nie traćwa nadziei!", in Kisielewski: *Lata pozłacane...*, 568-570, quotation on 569-570, my transl.; also KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: "Tajemnice nowych Polaków", in Kisielewski: *Lata pozłacane...*, 515.

⁹⁸⁴ Kisielewski: "Oj nie traćwa...!", 570, my transl.

suggested the existence of historical forces that acted of their own volition and played with human beings as they pleased:

To live in history —how annoying! Now then, contrary to what many scholarly men think, history is an extremely flippant lady and breaks herself (or rather breaks us) into different pieces, she mocks her clientele considerably by resorting to a whole series of accidents that may look tremendously comical to a collateral observer, but that are not funny at all for those involved in them (...).

... I question the graveness of the activities of Mrs. History, she makes jokes, though we rarely appreciate them, treating them with deadly seriousness.⁹⁸⁵

At other moments, however, Kisielewski deemed this lady completely humorless: “History places us like porcelain figurines, we try to move a little, smile, put a brave face on things, but in fact all this goes nowhere, for history does not let go, nor does it joke”. Talking of porcelain figurines, the author remembered how he had felt as helpless as a puppet on September 1st, 1939, when his world was ruined and he was pushed into history (“wkroczyłem w historię”) without being asked⁹⁸⁶.

But Kisiel was not the only one to think that fate was not on the Poles’ side since the 1930s. In his determination to make some sense of the ordeal that their grandparents, parents and they themselves had undergone, and somehow similarly to Jerzy Holzer and Krystyna Kersten (Chapters 2 and 3), Adam Michnik came to the conclusion that his fellow countrymen did everything they could to avoid the blow (in different ways and with different ideologies), and yet did not succeed:

I have tried many times to locate in recent history the exact point at which an error or a wrong choice in Polish policy foredoomed the nation to its subsequent misery. And I cannot find it. As I’ve examined the wartime and postwar history of the Polish cause, I’ve had the feeling that Clio, the muse of history, must have turned her back on Poland, as if she didn’t even give it the slightest chance of interrupting the stream of misery or of finding ways to emerge from its national oppression. All the different trends in Polish politics lost.⁹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it was impossible for human beings to travel otherwise, Kisiel admitted: “history is such a vicious horse —but one must ride it, because there is no other”⁹⁸⁸.

It was fatalism, yet an unpredictable one. Like a perverse, implacable but capricious clockwork machinery, history did not follow any given path, much to the chagrin of believers in continuous progress and simple totalizing explanations, officialdom and oppositionists alike: “I definitely do not believe in automatic progress, especially psychic, spiritual. In certain periods the world can go forward, in others backwards, life has many surprises in store and gladly upsets all schemes, especially those which were already widely known and accepted”⁹⁸⁹.

Curiously, from time to time Kisielewski worked his way towards a personal form of hope, for, despite his insistence on the powerlessness of individuals and perceiving himself as frail as a porcelain figurine, in his view individuals were also the only possible source of moral actions, hence the single ones who could improve things and prevent further catastrophes. Since he was a confessed pessimist, the fact that he saw a

⁹⁸⁵ Kisielewski: “Czemu...?”, 678, my transl.

⁹⁸⁶ Kisielewski: “Ja jestem figurynka...”, 582, my transl.

⁹⁸⁷ Michnik: “Maggots and Angels”, 181.

⁹⁸⁸ Kisielewski: “Czemu...?”, 678-679, my transl.

⁹⁸⁹ Kisielewski: “Tajemnice...”, 512, my transl.; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “O mojej religijności”, in Kisielewski: *Lata połączane...*, 665 and 667; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “I cóż dalej szary człowieku?”, in Kisielewski: *Lata połączane...*, 571-576.

chance for success, no matter how small and imperfect, is perhaps more significant than in many other cases analyzed in this research.

The way Kisiel tried to emancipate, that is, to get rid of the feeling he was a mere puppet at history's mercy, was through his articles in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. He was not very confident, though, about the usefulness of his texts, or about the effective power of his readers, who might be just as overwhelmed and defenseless as he was: "for who reads it [*Tygodnik Powszechny*] today? Only pious men— and other figurines", he complained in 1979. Nevertheless, Kisiel felt it was his duty to remain critical with what surrounded him, to approach key controversial topics (unlike the journalists of official magazines) and to express himself as freely as he could in order to maintain the spiritual health of his country, just like very prominent nineteenth-century writers and artists had done before him (Hugo, Dickens, Wyspiański, Żeromski)⁹⁹⁰. Thus, he made an appeal from hopelessness in a similar fashion as Michnik pictured the hopeless defense of values that *inteligencja* should carry out in spite of everything else (Chapter 3). The name of his fixed column between 1976 and 1981, "Wołanie na puszczy" ("A cry in the wilderness"), was certainly not accidental; "a fight without faith in victory" he confessed later on, "is very close to my heart"⁹⁹¹.

But Kisielewski's accepted impotence was not at odds with his strong individualistic will and his determination to preserve his independence as much as he could. By assuming his own human fragility, he also showed the vulnerability of those who believed themselves invulnerable under the aegis of Communist power. In this sense, they were all on an equal footing, "defeated" and "winners" alike. "Winners" might have re-written history and imposed their time *continuum* (for the moment), but they were not history itself. Kisiel reminded them they were puppets too, and that under no circumstances would he become a puppet's puppet. Despite not treating Poland very well lately, history was simply beyond all monopoly:

I don't want to dance the gavotte⁹⁹² with them [with *publicyści* who avoided positioning themselves in controversial issues, C.A.], poor things, I prefer to be a separate figurine, with a seeming dancing grace of its own. —A cabaret? —yes. But my own, with my own, deliberate clay for porcelain.

Above all, a porcelain figurine defends itself so that other figurines do not wish to manipulate it.⁹⁹³

Given the fatalistic turn of Kisielewski's thought, it is logical to wonder which was his standpoint regarding the question of responsibility. Always avoiding too easy or simple answers (besides too explicit, due to censorship), through the *felieton* "Konflikt z samym sobą" ("A conflict with oneself") he provided some illuminating clues in this respect.

The trigger for his reflection was the recently-published autobiographical work of the former Nazi leader and, since 1942, Minister for Weapons, Munitions and Armaments Albert Speer⁹⁹⁴. Kisiel was surprised by the degree of Speer's honesty when he pondered up to what extent did he know about Nazi Germany's crimes back then, to what extent did he try to persuade himself about his ignorance or, consciously or half-

⁹⁹⁰ Kisielewski: "Ja jestem figurynka...", 582-585, quotation on 583, my transl.

⁹⁹¹ Kisielewski: "O mojej religijności", 666, my transl.

⁹⁹² A folk dance originated in France in the early modern times, which was danced in a line or circle. Besides devoting himself to *publicystyka*, Kisielewski was also a composer.

⁹⁹³ Kisielewski: "Ja jestem figurynka...", 585, my transl.

⁹⁹⁴ SPEER, Albert: *Spandau: The Secret Diaries*, New York and Toronto, Macmillan, 1976. Original German edition: *Spandauer Tagebücher* [Spandau Diaries], Berlin and Frankfurt am Main, Propyläen/Ullstein Verlag, 1975.

consciously, self-justified his actions in the name of higher, fundamental national goals, giving full priority to the end in detriment of the means. He even supposed that, if he were young again, he would follow Hitler once more. Going from the particular to the general, and therefore alluding to Communism in a veiled way, Kisielewski summarized: “It is a disturbing study, due to its absolute and thus disconcerting sincerity, about the ambivalence of human activities and about the inevitable conflict between people’s intentions and the means to carry them out, when old truths in new circumstances become lies, and old imponderables— crimes”⁹⁹⁵. Apparently still talking only about Nazism, the author went further ahead in his reflection on collective behavior and the way in which totalitarianism distorted moral values and destroyed or hushed up any kind of ethical doubts, objections and (self-)criticism, finally leading to disaster:

The president of the GFR Walter Scheel once said that in 1939 and 1940 Germany went to the war without inhibition or complexes, without remorse, feeling it had right fully on its side, for ‘its psyche was falsified’ artificially. It is very interesting, a group’s psyche also suffers sclerosis when it shuts itself away from self-critical gusts, when the awareness of inevitable internal conflicts and of the threatening ambivalence of actions is replaced by the cult to a monolithic system or to absolute megalomania. Many questions arise at this point: can a nation make mistakes? Is the mistake of a group automatically the mistake of an individual? To back down and admit one’s mistake is something honorable, or shameful? And for whom: for the individual, for the group? And can history make mistakes? And what is history: a fetish, an idol, a demon, a mechanism, or simply a collection of coincidences, integrated *post factum* by the human brain, which inveterately searches for generalizations and explanations?

I will not give an unequivocal answer, the awareness of the existence of a secular conflict and a secular ambivalence prevents me to do so. I think that the complications of the world are encoded artfully and equivocally (with a double or repeated code, a palimpsest⁹⁹⁶), hence the futility of human efforts to explain everything with single-minded, single-discipline theories.⁹⁹⁷

With such reflections, Kisielewski publicly claimed the right to doubt and dissent (essential for any independent intellectual, or actually any person), and insisted on the complexity of history as a response to those who tried to impose a single way of thinking or ignored the dark sides of the human soul. The uncertainty or absurdity of human behavior and how it is registered (i.e. the nature of history, the senselessness of events unless people make some sense out of them), the frequent incompatibility between good theories or utopias and good practices or the alarming easiness with which perceptions radically changed along with circumstances were fundamental topics that, according to him, were stated more truthfully in Speer’s uncomfortable memoirs than in many detached treatises on Nazism.

Perhaps Kisiel was not completely sure about who had the ultimate responsibility of past and present catastrophes and destruction, including Polish, but he was sure that any chance of improvement could only sprout from within the individual, as a personal, private and moral decision:

⁹⁹⁵ KISIELEWSKI, Stefan [pseud. Kisiel]: “Konflikt z samym sobą”, in Kisielewski: *Lata poślacane...*, 529-530, quote from 530, my transl.

⁹⁹⁶ Interestingly, George Orwell also used the idea of the palimpsest in 1984: “All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary”; ORWELL, George: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London, Penguin Books, 2000 (1949), 42. Not surprisingly, Orwell was one of the most popular foreign authors among readers of Polish underground press: more than a dozen independent publishing houses or humbler printing initiatives issued *Animal Farm* (*Folwark zwierzęcy*) and *1984* (usually translated as *Rok 1984* or *1984. Powieść*), especially along the 1980s. Ośrodek Karta’s catalogue of Polish underground books is available online: “Archiwum Opozycji. Książki drugiego obiegu”, <http://www.karta.org.pl/pdf/orginal/13966039698753.pdf> (accessed on October 26th, 2014).

⁹⁹⁷ Kisielewski: “Konflikt z samym...”, 530-531, my transl.

... because the earthly adventure of man is his spiritual test, which he takes individually, not collectively. The topics of the examination, thus, are just a pretext, what is important is the effort put in their solving; it's the intellectual and moral effort what counts regardless whether one succeeds or fails. (...) Above the successes and failures in life, the religious man is aware that he has a duty towards another superior system of values and appraisals in which an apparent paradox comes true, that the first will be last and the last will be first. A frustrated life is usually more valuable than a successful life, hence pessimism might be spiritually more important than optimism.⁹⁹⁸

With his particular view of Catholicism, completely against Communist collectivism and its (in his opinion) fallacious rhetoric of equality, Kisiel insisted on the importance of struggling for one's supreme beliefs, no matter what the final results were. If, as he believed, the single relevant progress was moral progress, the history of the twentieth century gave no reason to be optimistic, because technical, scientific and medical advances had been used, among other things, to create gas chambers and the atomic bomb, to cause genocides on a scale never imagined before: "What progress are we speaking about, especially when millions of innocent souls have been lost before they even had the opportunity to take the earthly moral test? Isn't this Satan's triumph, when earthly, massive cataclysms turn people aside from their individual spiritual fate?"⁹⁹⁹.

In line with his pessimistic stance, Kisielewski did not hope for an ultimate victory of good during earthly life, but rather envisaged the existence of some kind of balance between good and evil in the spiritual sphere, so that basic moral problems had remained the same throughout space and time. In his opinion, a religious man (though we might add too: an intellectual) should look for those permanent ethical dilemmas among the incessant changes taking place in the world¹⁰⁰⁰.

And once such continuities were spotted, who might find the key to them, at least temporarily? Who would be able to solve the sphinx's new riddle, to decipher history's palimpsest, rewritten over and over again by the "winners" of the moment, but never quite concealing the multiple underlying texts that people still remembered or even knew by heart? Who were the last who would become the first, who would catch a glimpse of the permanently forthcoming peril, of the continuously ongoing battle, like Benjamin's victims-agents?

Maybe a very naïve person, not involved in anything nor in charge of anything, hence free from systemic and professional sclerosis, not any theoretician, nor specialist, nor expert, nor prophet, but an everyday witness who has maintained simple axioms and imponderables, looking around him in a fresh and unselfish way, but without closing his eyes to 'atypical' conflicts and 'irrelevant' difficulties characteristic of all things, including the human soul. Atypical and irrelevant, but in fact decisive, just like the air's invisible resistance decides that a fired carbine bullet will not fly endlessly. 'After the noise, the roar, the toil,/ Meek, simple, little people will take charge of the legacy'. Meek, because they will be free from the pretensions of conceptual sclerosis. Simple, because they will be faithful to plain everyday truths and observations. Little, because they will not need the destructive narcotics of greatness. An apparent one [greatness] at that. Because only individual moral greatness still means something and contributes to something.¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹⁸ Kisielewski: "O mojej religijności", 666, my transl.

⁹⁹⁹ Kisielewski: "O mojej religijności", 667-668, quote on 668, my transl.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Kisielewski: "O mojej religijności", 667.

¹⁰⁰¹ Kisielewski: "Konflikt z samym...", 531, my transl.

The verses that Kisielewski quoted in his work belong to a poem written by Adam Mickiewicz; the full stanza could be roughly translated as follows:

... The hands fighting for the people will be cut off by the people,
The names dear to the people will be forgotten by the people...
Everything will pass. After the noise, the roar, the toil,
Meek, simple, little people will take charge of the legacy.¹⁰⁰²

Mickiewicz's words (hence also Kisiel's) contain a clear reference to the Beatitudes delivered by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically to the second one: "Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5: 4)¹⁰⁰³. Since Kisielewski was generally quite critical with romanticism and the Messianic ideas concerning Poland's uniqueness¹⁰⁰⁴, it is pretty interesting to note how Messianism found its way back into the author's thought through his beliefs and expectancies, the latter perhaps only half-acknowledged. Therefore, despite his usually negative assessments of history and people's (wrong)doings, deeming them a mystery almost impossible to unravel, Kisielewski introduced a tinge of hope through morality. Would the meek someday, somehow, inherit the earth, as the Beatitudes said?

Władysław Bartoszewski, also Catholic and a good friend of Kisiel¹⁰⁰⁵, pointed out through a practical example something quite similar to the latter's meditations on the moral behavior of ordinary people: Once, during the Second World War, a gamekeeper witnessed near his home one of the nightly mass executions and burials of Polish citizens that were being carried out by the Nazis in the outskirts of Warsaw. From that day on, he risked his life by following German firing-squads in the woods at night and managed to mark the places where the victims had been buried. After the War, the corpses of many disappeared and murdered people were found and identified thanks to his dangerous, solitary, quiet work¹⁰⁰⁶. Bartoszewski was convinced that

In the twenty-first century or even later one will be able to read that there were completely ordinary people —nuns, peasants, simple people without much education, who did what was fair. The societies of both our countries [Germany and Poland, C.A.] are built upon these people. The Jews say that each day must have its own righteous person for the world to keep on turning. But there is not just one: there are whole crowds that do instinctively what they think it's fair. That is precisely to work for peace.¹⁰⁰⁷

Very much in this vein, Kisielewski's "Conflict with oneself" ends up with a tribute to ordinary, powerless (especially "thirst of power"-less) but watchful persons, who individually start up a silent opposition based on principles, moral doubts and dilemmas that, put together, act as "the air's invisible resistance". According to the author, only they might be able to pull the emergency brake of the train of so-called "progress", the utopic progress that, in the name of moral and legitimate goals, had

¹⁰⁰² In Polish: "...Ręce za lud walczące, sam lud poobcina,/ Imion miłych ludowi lud pozapomina.../ Wszystko przejdzie. Po szumie, po huk, po trudzie,/ Wezmą dziedzictwo ciś, ciemni, mali ludzie". Source: "Urywki bez napisów" ["Untitled snippets"], in *Poezye Adama Mickiewicza*, vol. I, Cracow, 1899. Available online: http://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Urywki_bez_napis%C3%B3w (accessed on October 5th, 2014).

¹⁰⁰³ One of the multiple translations in Polish: "Błogosławieni ciś, albowiem oni na własność posiadają ziemię". Depending on the edition of the Bible, the order of the Beatitudes may vary, and hence the verse in Matthew's gospel. I checked two Spanish ones.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Introduction.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Kisielewski: *Abecadło Kisiela*, 7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 24-25.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 48, my transl.

taken to moral ambivalence, self-deceit and later on to the perpetration of the most immoral crimes. By remaining vigilant and critical, i.e. by listening to the warning signs of their own private conscience, these people would not get carried away by an escalation of collective totalitarian madness, which prevented others from seeing that there were more options, that today's leaders did not own the truth and that their proposals were definitely not the single, nor the fairest answer to social problems. With a disagreement, by speaking out about one's uncertainties and, of course, by following one's own conscience, the imposed and artificial uniformity would begin to crack. The means are far more important than any goal: such was the maxim of the moral, individualistic revolution that Kisiel supported.

Moving on now to more optimistic assessments, Adam Michnik believed that, in spite of the Martial Law, the course of history was at a turning point in the PRL:

We live in truly interesting times. We witness the barren twilight of the old world of totalitarian dictatorship. (...)

We live in a strange state of suspension. Nothing has been sealed yet. The grand fate of the nation and the small fates of the people still hang in the balance. We are trapped by the humiliating feeling of helplessness and impotence. Is this right?

In 1942 Czesław Miłosz wrote: 'In an historical moment when nothing depends on man, everything depends on him —this paradoxical truth is revealed today with particular force'.
And also today...¹⁰⁰⁸

In order to profit from that new "now-time", Polish society had to recover its lost confidence and complete as much as possible its process of empowerment —with democratic oppositionists' help. It certainly all started with a personal decision, a humble individual contribution, but the coordinated sum of such efforts could finally bring about much desired changes in the Communist system. To not lose hope and trust that others were still pushing in the same direction, despite not being able to see them, had been essential for Michnik himself, especially in the hardest moments:

You know how profound the feeling of loneliness can be. You think that you are powerless against the police-army machine that was mobilized on that December night. You still don't know what will happen. You still don't know that people will begin to recover from the shock, that underground papers will appear, that Zbyszek B. [Zbigniew Bujak] will lead his Solidarity region from the underground, that in Wrocław they will fail to capture Władek F. [Władysław Frasyniuk]; that Gdańsk, Świdnik, and Poznań will again shake up all Poland; that illegal union structures will be formed. You still don't know that the generals' vehicle is sinking in sand, its wheels spinning in place, that the avalanche of repression and calumnies is missing its aim.

But you do know, as you stand alone, handcuffed, with your eyes filled with tear gas, in front of policemen who are shaking their guns at you —you can see it clearly in the dark and starless night, thanks to your favorite poet [Czesław Miłosz]— that the course of the avalanche depends on the stones over which it rolls.

And you want to be that stone that will reverse the course of events.¹⁰⁰⁹

It would not be the first time they achieved it, anyway: according to Jan Józef Lipski, former members of KOR had already managed to "reprogram social life" and alter considerably history's progression back in the mid-1970s. In its determination to help and ally with the workers who were victims of repression in June 1976, this reduced group of *inteligenci* challenged the rules and timings of the "winners" and tried to take advantage of the system's cracks within its capabilities. Oppositionists needed to make the most of the margin left to transform things, conformism was not an option:

¹⁰⁰⁸ Michnik: "Letter from the Gdańsk...", 98-99.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Michnik: "Why You Are Not Signing...", 14-15.

My understanding of social life is neither deterministic nor voluntaristic. I believe simply that human will and the intellect directing it (or the emotions, but not —God forbid— the emotions alone) are also a part of reality and cannot be disregarded. As a result, all mechanisms that are basically determined are subject to conscious modifications of structure and program, and this means that **the future can only rarely be seen as a unique and unavoidable consequence of the present**. In other words, there exist both a theoretical and a practical possibility of social engineering and of politics.

In my opinion, it was precisely the Workers' Defense Committee that functioned as such a voluntaristic factor and that —thanks in part to the intelligence, inventiveness, stubbornness, determination and hard work of its leaders and participants, and in part to circumstances— **was able to modify considerably the course of events that could have been anticipated** from the perspective of mid-1975 (the issue of the Constitution¹⁰¹⁰). KOR modified the course of events *considerably*, but only within the bounds of its own possibilities, which were limited not simply by the numerical strength of the movement but also by the tremendous inertia of the system. Even so, this was possible only because the government limited its response to the activities of KOR to restraints and repressions that represented a negation of the need for reforms.¹⁰¹¹

Lipski's perception of present time had much to do with the idea of "open history" suggested by Michael Löwy in his analysis of Benjamin's Theses. Politically speaking, it meant to bear in mind "the possibility (not the inevitability) of *catastrophes*, on the one hand, and of great *emancipatory* movements, on the other", and to realize that some of those chances of failure or success actually depended on present-day "defeated" and oppressed¹⁰¹².

In Polish oppositionists' case, both failure and success were closely connected to the decisions taken in Moscow. The major national catastrophe was envisaged as a military invasion of the country by the Soviet Union; in this sense, the precedents of Hungary and Czechoslovakia played a fundamental role in the Poles' consciousness —dissidence, officialdom and men in the street alike. As to emancipation, oppositionists wished to diminish the USSR and Communist Party control as much as possible, heading either towards internal pluralism and sovereignty in a kind of Finlandization process, or, *Realpolitik* permitting, towards complete independence in the future.

Once the awareness of agency was recovered, two new elements came into play: power and responsibility¹⁰¹³. The famous opposition poster designed by Tomasz Samecki for June 1989 elections (Figure 15)¹⁰¹⁴, depicting Will Kane (Gary Cooper) in the film *High Noon* (1952), became a symbol of these feelings, as well as of the crucial historical relevance of the forthcoming polls. It announced that the definite duel had finally arrived: the lonely and apparently powerless *Solidarność* marshal (but nevertheless morally powerful, because he was not willing to submit or to flee from his duty) had to face the gang of wrongdoers (Communist system) once and for all, in a

¹⁰¹⁰ Since Autumn 1975 Edward Gierek's government had been trying to introduce some amendments in the PRL Constitution, such as to establish the leading position of the PZPR, confirm the unbreakable bonds between PRL and the Soviet Union and an article saying that "citizens' rights were inseparable from a reliable and conscientious fulfilment of duties to the Homeland", which was tantamount to making people's rights conditional on the acceptance and obedience of Communist state's orders and stipulations. There were considerable protests against these changes among independent and opposition circles and, due to them, as well as to the position of the Polish Episcopate, the number of amendments was reduced and the final modifications were passed on February 10th, 1976.

¹⁰¹¹ Lipski: *KOR...*, 4, bold mine; also 5.

¹⁰¹² Löwy: *Walter Benjamin: aviso...*, 169-185, quotation on 175, my transl.

¹⁰¹³ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 79. For the Czech case: Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 364.

¹⁰¹⁴ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

Western film-like clear-cut division between good and evil¹⁰¹⁵. It was the Poles' turn and responsibility to speak up peacefully through their votes: in this occasion, Gary Cooper had left his revolver at home.



Figure 15

Going now back to almost a decade before the fall of Polish Communist government, one of the contexts in which the clash between the sense of power and the sense of responsibility became more evident was in the sessions of *Solidarność*'s National Commission at the beginning of the 1980s, as we will see next.

B.2) Case study: Power and Responsibility in Solidarność's National Commission

On September 17th, 1980, more than thirty representatives of the Founding Committees of different striking Polish factories (Międzyzakładowe Komitety Założycielskie, MKZ) agreed to unify their statutes and officially register as a single national federal trade union, giving birth to NSZZ "*Solidarność*". That same day, they also decided that a National Coordinating Commission (KKP), later re-named National Commission (KK)¹⁰¹⁶, would head the union and be its supreme executive organ at

¹⁰¹⁵ In June 2004, when paying tribute to the recently deceased Ronald Reagan, Lech Wałęsa wrote about this placard: "I have often been asked in the United States to sign the poster that many Americans consider very significant (...). It was a simple but effective gimmick that, at the time, was misunderstood by the Communists. They, in fact, tried to ridicule the freedom movement in Poland as an invention of the 'Wild' West, especially the U.S.

But the poster had the opposite impact: Cowboys in Western clothes had become a powerful symbol for Poles. Cowboys fight for justice, fight against evil, and fight for freedom, both physical and spiritual. Solidarity trounced the Communists in that election, paving the way for a democratic government in Poland. It is always so touching when people bring this poster up to me to autograph it. They have cherished it for so many years and it has become the emblem of the battle that we all fought together". WAŁĘSA, Lech: "In Solidarity", *The Wall Street Journal*, June 11th, 2004, in <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB108691034152234672> (accessed on October 6th, 2014).

¹⁰¹⁶ Komisja Krajowa Porozumiewawcza and Komisja Krajowa, respectively.

national level. Made up of one representative of each regional MKZ, and admitting new memberships after its formal registration¹⁰¹⁷, the KKP represented the trade union to the PRL government, coordinated the activities of its regional organizations, controlled its budget, established the principles to create new professional or industrial sections, was in charge of signing collective agreements and elected the members of the Presidium (devoted to bureau and legal issues), as well as the chairman of the Commission itself. Lech Wałęsa was appointed for this last post, and his deputies were Andrzej Gwiazda and Ryszard Kalinowski.

The participants in the plenary sessions (*posiedzenia*) of the Commission were numerous and varied: the political advisers to the KKP¹⁰¹⁸, more than one regional representative of factories and working branches (chairmen and delegates), spokesmen of the peasant section and other institutions, the representatives of the eleven cities where the movement was stronger (usually known as “the eleven”), people working for the KKP or Gdańsk’s MKZ..., to the point that up until today it is impossible to provide a full list of those who attended them each time¹⁰¹⁹. During the meetings, which usually took place twice a month, and monthly since May 1981, the discussion topics ranged from the outline of general nation-wide actions to technical specificities and regional or inter-factory problems. The majority of them were tape-recorded¹⁰²⁰ and, after the establishment of Martial Law (which illegalized *Solidarność*), they were transcribed and published by the main underground publishing house Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, within the collection Archiwum ‘Solidarności’ (The Archive of *Solidarność*). The English summary included in each of these books provided the following arguments supporting the past, present and future relevance of such assemblies:

... the Commission played a key role not only because its decisions were binding for members of the Union and its local branches, but also because it was the arena for most important public polemics and discussions concerning both the internal problems of the union itself and general political problems of a national impact. (...)

... the unrestrained nature of the sessions (as a rule the speakers presented their texts “off the cuff”), the representative character of the Commission and the role played by the participants in the life of the Union and in the political struggle current at the time —all this means that the records of the debates held by the KKP (KK) are an exceptionally valuable source for the history of Poland and of the independent social movements in the September 1980-December 1981 period.¹⁰²¹

Given the atmosphere of debate of the KKP sessions, from time to time some of its participants brandished in their argumentations general questions concerning responsibility and power. In addition, the tension and emotions present in some especially crucial moments of the decision making process took at least once to a dramatic resort to history and personal traumatic experiences (plus the ensuing

¹⁰¹⁷ Rising from 40 in October 1980 to 53 by February 1981.

¹⁰¹⁸ Political advisers and experts were opposition *inteligenci* who had collaborated with repressed and striking workers since 1976 or during the Gdańsk Shipyards’ strike of August 1980. They could attend the KKP meetings and give their opinion and counsel to the workers. Among them: Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronisław Geremek, Jan Olszewski, Władysław Siła-Nowicki and Jacek Kuroń.

¹⁰¹⁹ Further information in Polish about the KKP/KK can be found online in the webpage of Encyklopedia Solidarności, in the entry written by Grzegorz Majchrzak: http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=T01104_Krajowa_Komisja_Porozumiewawcza_%E2%80%99ES%E2%80%99D. A briefer version in English of the same text can be found in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Coordinating_Commission (both accessed on October 7th, 2014).

¹⁰²⁰ Usually by the Union journalists, who could access the KKP gatherings as observers.

¹⁰²¹ *Komisja Krajowa NSZZ “Solidarność”. Posiedzenie w dniach 23-24 marca 1981*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1986, 126, also 127.

discussion), showing the extent to which historical awareness had permeated in opposition ranks —as well as the range of viewpoints among its members concerning the approach to national past and its relation (or lack of relation) with present time.

At the beginning of November 1980, the barely two month-old Independent Self-governing Trade Union *Solidarność* was still immerse in its registration process. Firstly, it had tried to register in Warsaw Voivodeship Court, but given the latter's resistance (which led to the first nation-wide hour-long strike organized by *Solidarność*) and the attempt to modify some of the clauses of the movement's statute without Solidarity members' knowledge and consent as a condition for its approval, *Solidarność* leaders decided to take their demand to the Polish High Court instead. Communist authorities' attempts to hamper or even halt the legalization of the first nation-wide independent trade union in the Eastern Bloc, or of any other independent association following its lead, was the main concern of the moment, and an especially delicate situation considering the possibility of an armed intervention from Moscow.

In the KKP, which gathered on November 9th to deal with this issue, two lines of action could be already spotted among its participants: a more moderate one that wanted to exhaust all negotiation paths with the Polish government before effectively embarking upon further forms of pressure, and the hard line, which mistrusted parleying with PRL representatives and betted instead on early strikes in order to achieve the trade union's targets. During this meeting, one of Wałęsa's deputies in the Commission, Andrzej Gwiazda, declared himself against a compromise with the government¹⁰²². Other representatives and advisers, however, felt that the moment was critical and that the chances of a Soviet invasion or a declaration of Martial Law were high, so the majority finally chose to negotiate a compromise solution with Communist authorities. During the discussion prior to this decision, Karol Modzelewski's eloquent and dramatic speech, as Jerzy Holzer described it, warned about the risks of pressing on too far and increasing the tension between the parts:

Let's not forget that the fate of Poland, and perhaps not just of Poland, is in our hands. Maybe this is the single case in postwar history where the statute of a trade union can be the cause of events on a European scale. I believe that the majority of you voted for the day of strike readiness, that is, for the strike (in the case that the outcome at the [high] court didn't turn out as expected) with a heavy heart. Regarding this strike as a last resort, this strike was not called last Tuesday in the Gdańsk Shipyards, for if we didn't choose the option of the use of force then, it means we took the road that leads, either illogically: back to the Shipyards, to the same place where we are now, or logically: to a compromise settlement acceptable to both sides.¹⁰²³

Less than twenty-four hours later, on November 10th 1980, the High Court registered *Solidarność* with the statute clauses and annexes firstly agreed by the KKP. The independent trade union judged the decision as a victory and that same day the National Coordinating Commission called on Solidarity members to respect the statute, to go to strike only as a last resort and hence to finally call off the one planned for November 12th¹⁰²⁴. In this particular crossroads, the young opposition movement chose the moderation path.

And it would not be the single time that temperance won the hand. Another especially tense situation for the national executive organ of *Solidarność* came about

¹⁰²² Only a few months later, Gwiazda (n. 1935) became one of the most critical voices within *Solidarność*, especially concerning Wałęsa's leadership, which he deemed undemocratic and far too inclined to compromise with Communist authorities. He protested, together with other Solidarity members, against the Round Table Agreements. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

¹⁰²³ Quoted in Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 132.

¹⁰²⁴ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 132-133.

only four months later, as a result of the “Bydgoszcz events”, the worst political crisis experienced by Solidarity in its sixteen months of legal existence.

On March 19th, 1981, the delegates of *Solidarność* attending a session of the Voivodeship National Council of the city of Bydgoszcz (Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa) were beaten up by the Militia after protesting for not being finally allowed to express their views (especially concerning Solidarity’s farmer division, still pending to be registered) during the meeting. Three of them were injured and taken to hospital, among them the Union leader of the Bydgoszcz region branch, Jan Rulewski (n. 1944).

The majority of Union members and activists considered this new repressive action as a direct attack against *Solidarność* and a provocation, given the biased information provided by official television about the incident and the military manoeuvres of the Warsaw Pact currently taking place in Polish territory under the supervision of a Soviet marshal and the recently appointed Polish Prime Minister general Jaruzelski. Even many sections of the Communist Party expressed their anger about the aggression. From the next day, thousands of factories issued resolutions demanding justice and the establishment of political liability: punishments for the guilty policemen and for those who did not prevent the incident, governmental dismissals, etc. Regional leaders of Solidarity held meetings and voted for the decision to call a general strike. Following instructions of the National Commission, they declared to be ready for a strike, though without specifying a date, and moved their seats to big factories, while the KK itself moved to the Gdańsk Shipyards. On March 22nd, Union representatives led by Wałęsa met government representatives headed by the vice-Prime Minister Rakowski in Warsaw, but their talks did not render any positive result. In view of this situation, the Commission decided to celebrate an extraordinary open session on March 23rd, which continued on the 24th, to clarify what had exactly happened in Bydgoszcz (including the responsibility of authorities and oppositionists alike in the incident) and discuss what to do next. Journalists of the Union, as well as of official and foreign media, were present in the assembly¹⁰²⁵.

Two main options were put forward then: the declaration of a general strike of indefinite duration (except for vital services) starting on March 27th (Friday), which was initially supported by a majority; or the declaration of a four-hour strike for that same day as a warning to force the Communist government back to negotiations and, only if that strategy did not render the expected results, the declaration of a general occupation strike for the 31st. The *inteligenci* acting as political advisers to the Commission, as well as Lech Wałęsa himself, were in favor of the second alternative, arguing that rash actions increased the probabilities of the government declaring a state of emergency or of a Soviet armed reaction. Timings were essential, according to the lawyer Władysław Siła-Nowicki (1913-1994)¹⁰²⁶, just as they proved to be when the Polish civilian and

¹⁰²⁵ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 181-215; *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1; *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 127-128.

¹⁰²⁶ Siła-Nowicki studied law and worked as a clerk for the Ministry of Religious beliefs and Public Education in the last period of the Second Republic. He participated in the September 1939 military campaign against the Nazi invasion. Since 1941 he was member of the Armed Resistance, later of the Home Army (AK) and of the delegation in Poland of the government-in-exile. Within AK’s Directorate of Diversion, he was the leader of one of the squads in Warsaw and took part in the Uprising. He became a lawyer in 1959 and was a member of the Catholic *Inteligencja* Club (KIK) of Warsaw since 1961. He was the adviser of *Solidarność*’s National Commission (1980-1981) and defended oppositionists during political trials. In 1983 he was forced into retirement, but continued with his independent activities. He decided to become one of the members of PRL government’s Advisory Board, in which, among other things, he demanded the Katyń massacre to be clarified. During the Gdańsk Shipyards strike of 1988 he tried to mediate between Wałęsa and the Minister of Home Affairs Czesław Kiszczak. Due to his clashes with Solidarity’s leader, he took part in the plenary sessions of the Round Table as an independent

military leaders of the resistance movement against the Nazis, in which he actively participated, decided to start what was later known as the Warsaw Uprising (August 1st-October 2nd, 1944), perhaps an unnecessary risk with an overwhelmingly tragic result:

Ladies and gentlemen, this trade union is the hope of the nation, it's the hope of the country, it was born with the biggest of efforts, with the biggest of sacrifices, it exists thanks to the people, thanks to all of you as well. In the course of seven months it has carried out enormous changes and it is the hope of the nation. And now let us consider whether we should take the risk of losing what has become the hope of the nation, its strength! I don't know... We should not behave like children. I'm united to each person and I know that we'll defend each person but, ladies and gentlemen, I'm used to the fact that I've risked people's lives, and that those people died for relatively trivial issues, such as serving one or two sentences, [I'm used to] to the fact that corpses fell there, to the fact that people died in the uprising. Because when our colleague [Jan] Olszewski was a child¹⁰²⁷, I was commanding the diversion squad Warsaw-Downtown, and this burden of responsibility weighed heavily on me. I understood what it meant then, I understand it terribly well up until today. And it was carried out, and so many victims were sacrificed, and the single explanation I came up with was that I am risking my life in the same way, and therefore I can send people to death. And now we, due to... no one has even died, thank heaven, and we have to put at risk everything, the existence of the whole Union without considering whether it's necessary? Because the Union defends these three [Union activists beaten up by the Militia in Bydgoszcz], but the Union also defends thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands. And it must defend them. It must defend them not only today, but throughout time.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to consider whether a sensible and responsible person would take an extreme decision without absolute need. Would any of us, as parents, put our children, our wife, our home at risk, as the only, single solution?! Please, ladies and gentlemen, do not risk it. And now let's consider if we, as we have heard here today, were not to talk, only call a general strike, stop any labor, any work, any conversation —aren't we in the place of a person who's risking something even more beloved than the lives of our children, wives, families, something that has an enormous value for the whole country? Without turning back. And without profiting from other opportunities. (...) For if we do as some said here, if we call a general strike without hardly negotiating with the government, ladies and gentlemen, we'll put the government in a situation that it'll deem unacceptable. We'll be finishing, we'll be then putting an end to a certain era of Polish life that began in August, which was based on seeking political solutions.¹⁰²⁸

Believing that a general, one-sided and open-ended strike would be tantamount to large-scale repression and the possibility of violence also within opposition ranks, Siła-Nowicki perceived it too as a break with the new-born tradition established by *Solidarność*, that is, the non-violent and moderate resort to political means to solve conflicts and achieve the workers' and Polish society's demands: "It is a worldwide, unprecedented phenomenon that, during its seven months of existence, a group made up of many millions of people, in the very controversial Polish circumstances, never scratched a single policeman nor broke any shop window in the country! For we sought and seek political solutions, not the use of force"¹⁰²⁹.

During his long speech, the adviser to the National Commission insisted on the responsibility question: "Because the possibility of a complete disorganization of Polish life is in Solidarity's hands. And economic [disorganization], if we go towards confrontation. It is. But would the possibility of ordering Poland also be [in Solidarity's

participant. There, he demanded universal suffrage in presidential elections and represented the interests of the opposition groups lacking their own representatives in the conversations. In 1990-1992 he co-founded and headed the right-winged Christian Democratic Labor Party (Chrześcijańsko-Demokratyczne Stronnictwo Pracy). He was an MP in 1991-1993 and also judge in the State Tribunal between 1992 and 1994. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

¹⁰²⁷ Jan Olszewski was born in 1930.

¹⁰²⁸ *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 90, my transl.

¹⁰²⁹ Siła-Nowicki, in *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 90-91, my transl.

hands] if the government fought against us using violence?”. In Siła-Nowicki’s eyes, if the rash path was chosen, the chances of emancipation diminished to the benefit of the odds of a new catastrophe, and oppositionists’ liability for what happened would stretch beyond their life span: “We, ladies and gentlemen, hold accountable for Poland! And not only for our generation (applause)”¹⁰³⁰.

Like in Warsaw Uprising, a wrong or untimely decision could easily lead to disaster on a massive scale¹⁰³¹. Personal memories of senior members of *Solidarność* did not weigh solely on them as individuals: they also awakened historical consciousness and a sense of historicity in younger Polish oppositionists. The present moment was potentially full of possibilities, but if one did not act cautiously or take on account the power of the “winners”, once the choice was made there was no way back to the starting point. A “defeated” could be certainly accountable for engendering more “defeated” through his or her resolutions, Modzelewski (in November 1980) and Siła-Nowicki argued, especially considering they were leading a new independent national force. The repetition of such mistakes was simply inadmissible to the latter. There were still other alternatives, and the “right time” (*kairos*) should be found for each action leading towards emancipation.

Nevertheless, in March 1981 Karol Modzelewski nuanced considerably his previous view about strike calling. First of all, he criticized Siła-Nowicki’s use of history, for he considered that to compare their present situation with that of the leaders of AK when they decided to carry out Warsaw Uprising certainly caused a dramatic effect, but was deceiving. A social movement supported by ten million people, despite being very disciplined, had nothing to do with the Home Army’s military command; the decision to start the Uprising was based mainly on political reasons, while their decision about the strike had to do as well with the indignation and emotions that the “Bydgoszcz events” had caused among Polish society and Solidarity members. In addition, Modzelewski considered that, on this particular occasion, whichever decision was made would contain a risk that should be assumed, always bearing in mind that they were no army and hence lacked weapons and were not prepared for a combat situation—that it was civilians’ lives what could be at stake from the beginning. Decision makers had to live with uncertainty, for *a priori* there were no ultimately right or wrong answers, nor easy and obvious paths to follow—he, personally, was in favor of carrying out a general strike after the warning one:

And it’s not true that those commanders [AK’s] weren’t questioned, that there were no doubts or reproaches addressed to them. However, that decision concerned an army, an underground one, but nevertheless an army, that had 20,000 disciplined soldiers in Warsaw. That’s why I allow myself to say that responsibility in these same categories, that is, in categories of national tragedy, bloodshed, threat to the Polish state and nation, is taken whether the decision to go on a general strike is made or whether it’s not made! For both decisions can lead to bloodshed, to the threat of national and state existence. And we must realize this, pondering on this responsibility. So it’s not so simple: to remind about the threat to elemental national values doesn’t clarify which decision should be made.¹⁰³²

Nothing was written beforehand: the same decision, summed up to many others within or beyond oppositionists’ control, could eventually take to emancipation or to catastrophe. By adding complexity to the perception of time in his speech, Modzelewski

¹⁰³⁰ Siła-Nowicki, *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 91-92, my transl.

¹⁰³¹ After the declaration of Martial Law and the illegalization of *Solidarność*, the image of the Polish underground state during World War II acquired a much more positive meaning and became frequent among many oppositionists, given that the Union had gone into underground as well.

¹⁰³² *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 94, my transl.; also 95-96 and *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

was probably also questioning the straightforward model of progress and historical phases characteristic of Marxism, like many other oppositionists had done before him¹⁰³³. In their view, historical materialism surely wasn't the best theory to explain the recent history of dissident movements or workers' protests in Poland. Besides, to trust in the infallibility of a given resolution in such an atmosphere of uncertainty could be the quickest and easiest way back into a circle (*the* circle, *another* circle?) of repression. Whichever path was chosen, including the moderate and apparently less harmful one for some of his colleagues, it should be treaded on cautiously and bearing in mind many possible outcomes. That is why, although he declared himself a supporter of the general strike as a way to force the government into further agreements, Modzelewski deemed wiser to organize a shorter warning strike before launching out into something bigger:

There are two ways out of the indefinite general strike: either the government starts to shoot us and then entrusts the machineguns to someone else because it can't manage the situation on its own, or the government capitulates. The alternative is terribly burdened with the responsibility for the fate of the country. That's why I think that it would be an exceptionally risky decision [to carry out] before Friday [March 27th]. Being in favor of a general strike, and of setting its date now, I opt for Monday rather than Friday [to carry it out], and for it to be preceded by a strike... a general warning strike. Because (...) that doesn't weaken the action, but strengthens it.¹⁰³⁴

During the minutes of discussion following Władysław Siła-Nowicki's contribution, other oppositionists backed the idea of calling a general strike directly, without any preceding warning strike. For instance, the Union leader of the region of Łódź, Andrzej Słowik¹⁰³⁵, answered Solidarity's adviser:

I don't know who has taken most personally the reproach about us acting in the heat of the moment, about not perceiving this responsibility. I think that, despite our youth, a lot of us have spent more than one night pondering on what awaits us and on the consequences of signing the Statute of our Union (...). I think that a lot of us have thought about this. (...) ... we all have just one life and what we do in the future will depend on how we act now. (...) ... each submission on our part is going to be brutally profited against us. And more and more each time, it will escalate. It started with ripped out posters, with summons for interrogation, it took to beatings, after a while it'll take to something more. Only what'll we do then? We'll have a divided society, (...) ... we'll have to worry about how to gather around us the whole society. In this moment we are in a

¹⁰³³ We may find another example as well in the same KK session. Just before Modzelewski's aforementioned contribution, Andrzej Słowik argued: "And no social movement changing the system of political or social forces ever had a smooth and straightforward path before it. And we're not going to get carried away by the old propaganda, according to which somebody who led a social group had so clear conceptions, so well-prepared and detailed plans, that each situation was foreseen... There is no such system, and there never was, and there were always controversies on how to act". *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 93, my transl.

¹⁰³⁴ *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 96, my transl.

¹⁰³⁵ Andrzej Słowik (n. 1949) finished his studies of bakery industry in the Vocational School in 1966. Between 1967 and 1973 he worked as a machinist of sewing machines in the clothing factories of Łódź. In 1974-1981 he was employed in the Public Transport Industry of the city, and from 1977 and 1981 he was member of the PZPR. During the 1980 strikes, he co-founded and led the Inter-Factory Founding Committee (MKZ) of Łódź. In *Solidarność* since 1980, he became the leader of its branch in the Łódź region, plus a member of the Presidium of the National Commission and of "the eleven". He organized strikes, demonstrations and public assemblies. He was arrested on December 13th, 1981, and condemned to four and a half years of prison (later raised to six years), but was freed due to the amnesty of July 1984. He carried out clandestine activities from then on with a view to strengthening the trade union character of underground *Solidarność*. He affiliated the movement in 1986 to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and to the World Confederation of Labor. He became one of the Union leaders who opposed to Lech Wałęsa's view concerning the internal organization of Solidarity and was in favor of holding democratic elections in all its branches and levels. Between 1992 and 1993 he was deputy minister of Work and Social Policies in the Polish government. *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1.

profitable situation such as no other trade union in the world is. In each country, except in ours, there exist a few unions that must reach an agreement among them in the most varied situations. We have the whole society, the whole working society is with us, in a single union. And we must profit from this. Let's not perceive ourselves like a trade union, like a group of people out of touch with reality and with little sense¹⁰³⁶. Quite on the contrary. The goals before us are big because people's expectations are big, that's why decisions must also have certain strength. And let's not be aghast at the fact that it's a historical decision, for it really is.¹⁰³⁷

The historicity of *Solidarność*'s situation was, thus, perceived and shared by many oppositionists, but it took to clashing conclusions: while the importance of present circumstances made some act (and react) more cautiously, it stimulated others to act boldly and as soon as possible in order to seize the moment.

And there was yet one more reference to the past along the discussion. Adam Niezgoda¹⁰³⁸, another member of the Commission, responded Siła-Nowicki:

Today not only the fate of the Union is being decided, but also of the country. (...) *Mecenas*¹⁰³⁹ Mr. Siła-Nowicki spoke about the Uprising, but *Mecenas* Mr. Siła-Nowicki must also remember how the PSL was eliminated. Our Union could be equally eliminated. (...) ... murderous murders in many regions of the country —that's how the PSL was eliminated. And today we have the duty to defend our Union. The situation is clear, but both us in this room and the journalists who are now listening to us must go out of here convinced about the fairness of the decision we make. And it must be understandable to society.¹⁰⁴⁰

Being the single political group clearly opposing the new order after the end of the Second World War, the Polish People's Party became the main target for Communist attacks during the campaigns of the 1946 referendum and the elections of 1947. As a consequence, it split; thousands of its activists were arrested and around two hundred were killed by the Security Services¹⁰⁴¹. Thus, the phantom of Stalinist repression had been invoked in the meeting of *Solidarność*'s National Commission. For wasn't now the trade union the main obstacle for PRL authorities' preservation of the monopoly of power? Contrary to Siła-Nowicki, who feared that an untimely decision on their side could lead to catastrophe again, Niezgoda believed that this catastrophe might take

¹⁰³⁶ Słowik is, of course, referring to Communist trade unions in the Eastern Bloc.

¹⁰³⁷ *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 93, my transl.

¹⁰³⁸ Adam Niezgoda (n. 1930) studied Medicine and Christian Philosophy in Lublin. In June 1956, while on a working trip, he witnessed the protests and repression in Poznań and volunteered to help the city's health services. In 1976 he founded the Catholic *Inteligencja* Club of Lublin and since September 1980 he became a member of the MKZ of the Lubusz Land region and of Solidarity's National Commission. Later on he led one of the regional Committees for the Defense of the Prisoners of Conscience (KOWzP) and carried out different advisory, publishing and collaboration activities within *Solidarność*'s networks. He was imprisoned on December 13th, 1981, and was freed in June 1982. From October 1980 until January 1983 he was spied on by the Communist Security Services. He lived in the U.S. between 1983 and 1992. He then returned to Poland and worked as a doctor. From *Encyklopedia Solidarności*: http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=Adam_Niezgoda (accessed on October 19th, 2014).

¹⁰³⁹ In Polish, *Mecenas* is a courteous way to refer to attorneys and lawyers.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981*, 97, my transl.

¹⁰⁴¹ On this topic, among others: BUCZEK, Roman: *Na przełomie dziejów. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe w latach 1945-1947*, Toronto, Century Publishing Company Limited, 1983; ŁACH, Stanisław: *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe w latach 1945-1947*, Gdańsk, Marpress, 1995; TURKOWSKI, Romuald: *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe w obronie demokracji 1945-1949*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1992; ZALEWSKI, Frédéric: *Paysannerie et politique en Pologne. Trajectoire du parti paysan polonais du communisme à l'après communisme, 1945-2005*, Paris, Michel Houdiard, 2006. There are also many regional studies about PSL in the postwar period (Cracow, Opole, Warmia and Mazuria, Silesia, Lublin...), the majority published in Polish.

place in the shape of a new political purge and could perhaps be avoided by a timely defense. In any case, both of them longed for the tragic past not to repeat itself.

As a result of the KK session following the Bydgoszcz events, it was decided that a delegation of *Solidarność* would meet with government representatives on March 25th and that a four-hour warning strike (one of the most successful of the Union, according to Holzer) would take place on March 27th to press Communist authorities. If those measures did not work, the KK agreed that a general occupation strike should be carried out on March 31st. The day before this happened, on March 30th, *Solidarność* and the PRL government reached an agreement that put an official end to the Bydgoszcz crisis; the government admitted that the law had not been respected and compromised to punish the guilty, while Wałęsa, without previous agreement of Solidarity's National Commission, called off the general strike planned for the next day. Some Solidarity members regarded this as a too lukewarm position of the Union, especially concerning the support to the victims of the aggression and to the Farmer's union, and criticized the undemocratic behavior of Wałęsa. The injured Bydgoszcz leaders Rulewski and Łabentowicz wrote to the Commission: "It is a disgrace for the Union, which not only did not defend the political dignity of its people, but also sold the hopes of other social groups"¹⁰⁴². The mounting criticism and mistrust towards Wałęsa and the intellectual political advisers to the Commission (who were regarded as manipulators), plus the radicalization of some Union members from then on, proved that the Bydgoszcz conflict had opened an important breach in *Solidarność*¹⁰⁴³.

To sum up, when an important danger was perceived, both historical arguments and the question of the unprecedented nature of Solidarity movement were used among oppositionists in order to support their diverging views about responsibility and the exercise of power. Some believed it was the right time (*kairos*) for an energetic action, others that it was too soon and risky; some opted clearly for caution, others for boldness, depending on what they perceived as the biggest peril for the Union (chances of catastrophe), its major duty or opportunities (chances of emancipation); yet others, like Modzelewski, nuanced their standpoint and assumed there would be dangers to face regardless of which decision was finally made. Hence, directly or indirectly, and even in such an unusual context as a meeting of *Solidarność*'s executive organ (which was certainly not the ideal setting to employ historical discourses), the past became a reference point and an emotional and rhetorical resource that helped oppositionists to highlight the relevance of their deeds and find their own place within a "history in progress".

B.3) Ongoing history and its future trial: the question of posterity and other examples of opposition intellectuals' historicization of present time

When dealing with helplessness, hope and the issue of responsibility and power, other ensuing aspects of historicization of present time already surfaced at some points of the analysis of Polish *inteligencja*'s texts.

To start with, the question of transcendence was a persistent concern. Had intellectuals managed, together with other social groups, to change something in Poland? Would they be remembered later on, as years went by, for what they achieved? At the beginning of the 1990s, Stefan Kisielewski, always in a more negative mood than other oppositionists, hoped, on the one hand, to have effectively contributed to improve

¹⁰⁴² Text within Rulewski's biography in *Opozycja w PRL...*, vol. 1, my transl.

¹⁰⁴³ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 213-215.

the country's situation but, on the other hand, was conscious of the insignificance of individual deeds and feared that his writings would be forgotten now that the Communist epoch was over:

I'm afraid of having wasted my life. On the one hand, my political activities rendered some results, on the other —everything would have happened likewise without me. In my books I described mainly Communists and Marxists —it was, in my view, the most interesting oddity of our times. However what does it matter now, in this moment it doesn't interest anybody anymore, it has been forgotten (...).

I fear, thus, that my works about those odd times and the people they concerned also fall into the dark pit of oblivion.¹⁰⁴⁴

Once their lifelong enemy vanished, intellectuals could not avoid feeling some kind of emptiness and lack of purpose: "The fact is", Kisiel acknowledged in another of his conversations with Piotr Gabryel, "that I prepared myself mentally to play until death the role of the ill-regarded, of the quarrelsome, the disputatious, of one who observed all the absurdities of the world. My job was to criticize Communism, I made a living from this. Now, when reality has changed, I must look for another thing to do"¹⁰⁴⁵.

The future that many thought about but were not confident in witnessing had actually arrived and, according to the poet Adam Zagajewski, it altered Eastern European intellectuals' self-perception, especially if they had decided, like Kisielowski or himself, not to involve directly in politics:

Now it's all over. Now it's all about money and nationalism. Writers, who once represented mythical entities, now represent just themselves. I welcome this development enthusiastically; it suits me well. What's mythical and visionary hasn't ceased to exist; it has returned to where it belongs: to poetry, instead of nourishing political illusions. (...)

Who are we writers, those of us who have not entered the administration of new, transitional democracies? Now we represent just ourselves, our books, our past and future, our mistakes, and *bons mots*. And —as far as political struggle against bad, oppressive systems is concerned— **we have turned into historians who can dwell on their remembrances for decades**. I don't want to be misunderstood; I am not sneering at the historical function of literature, quite the contrary. **But we are no longer oracles**. We are writers, lonely and slightly comical figures, fighting with white sheet of paper, exactly like our colleagues from Australia and Italy, San Marino and Andorra.¹⁰⁴⁶

While they felt they were making history, opposition *inteligenci* struggled to imagine what would be the result of their actions and how they would be morally assessed in the future. At the same time (as we will see further along), they tried to weave the basis of that future narrative by providing first-hand the information about the present that they deemed important and wanted to preserve. Once the historicized present actually became history —in many cases the predominant master narratives of the post-Communist period and beyond—, what was there for a former opposition intellectual to do? The answer, of course, varied from one *intelligent* to another, but it basically depended on what they had perceived as their major enemy or threat in the past. In other words, whether they were against an authoritarian, unfair and repressive regime that had collapsed, or rather against authoritarianism, unfairness and repression

¹⁰⁴⁴ Kisielowski: *Testament Kisiela...*, 161, conv. date: 12-VI-1991, my transl.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Testament Kisiela...*, 75, conv. date: 18-XI-1990, my transl.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Adam Zagajewski within the debate "Intellectuals as leaders", *Partisan Review, Special Issue: Intellectuals and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 59, no. 4, Fall 1992, 670; bold mine, C.A. Available online: <http://hgar-pub1.bu.edu/web/partisan-review/search-collection/detail/331573> (accessed on October 21st, 2014).

in general. For those who believed that a democratic and liberal system also required critical voices and a constant moral supervision, besides the formation and maintenance of an active citizenry, *inteligencja*'s mission would be always prevailing, though it would have to adapt to new political and socio-economic circumstances¹⁰⁴⁷.

Back in the 1980s, Władysław Bartoszewski expressed himself about history and posterity in a much more optimistic way than his friend Kisielewski. To him, suffering or sacrifice was not an individual and senseless experience, but a seed out of which a crop would grow; a crop that, sooner or later, would be harvested by those coming after their generation. Bartoszewski trusted that the persons who, in spite of their moral and intellectual relevance, had been somehow "erased" by the "winners" of history or gone unnoticed in a given epoch, would be "re-discovered" and "(re-)introduced" in people's collective memory —producing an ultimate hermeneutical success:

Certain German diplomat asked me years ago in Warsaw, before we said farewell: 'Mr. Bartoszewski, we've known each other for some years. Tell me, do you only live for history?' He was not a silly man, and I answered him: not only for history. I do not know which part of me will remain. I cannot judge this for myself. God will decide what must remain. It has usually happened in Poland, and elsewhere, that a second or third generation values writers, philosophers or historians who had been forgotten for decades. One suddenly realizes that precisely these people built bridges towards the new generations, that they said something very important. And when one reprints what they wrote back then, it remains alive. We have in Poland dozens of examples. Let's think of our nineteenth-century literature. Until 1918 many Polish writers were foreign citizens who usually lived in Sweden, France or England. The greatest went abroad. Only a small percentage of Poles knew back then about their works and praised their surnames. For the majority they simply didn't exist. But in the generation of their grandsons this was regarded otherwise. Now they are considered some of the most prominent Poles. Each ordinary person knows today something about these people, about whom their ancestors and contemporaries didn't know a word.

So what's important for history, and what's unimportant? I must admit that it would be something great for me if in a hundred years' time I had a two-line entry in a Polish encyclopedia. I do not know if that will happen. But I hope so.

Does suffering have any sense? (...) Suffering should be fruitful for others. This means that one must decide consciously about one's own life.¹⁰⁴⁸

As yet another result of historicizing present time, some critical *inteligenci* took for granted the inclusion of recent Polish opposition experience, and especially of *Solidarność* and its precedents, in future history books and textbooks. "Works about the seventies and about KOR are needed for many reasons", Jan Józef Lipski pointed out in 1982, "and one can reasonably hope that they will one day be written"¹⁰⁴⁹. Such conviction was sometimes hinted through the comparison and connection with other past events which could be safely labeled as "historical": "The reader will probably note", Lipski said, "that I do not equally like all the [opposition] groups and all the activists. Probably it should not be this way; but even if this were a book about the turn of the century, or about the January 1863 uprising, I would have been unable to summon as much sympathy (or indifference) for Stefan Bobrowski as for Gustaw Awejde"¹⁰⁵⁰. Similarly, Jerzy Holzer believed that

Historians will discuss about the chances of success of the bloodless Polish revolution of 1980-1981 just like they discuss up until today about the chances of success of the Polish November

¹⁰⁴⁷ Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 313-364, esp. 354-364.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 49-50, my transl.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Lipski: *KOR...*, 1.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Lipski: *KOR...*, 8. Bobrowski and Awejde were the leaders of competing (moderate and radical) factions in the January Uprising (1863) against tsarist rule in partitioned Poland.

1830 Uprising, or of the Russian Revolution of 1905. This kind of discussions will remain unsolved, because there will always be arguments in favor of even totally opposing answers. Along the next decades, these discussions will be steeped in strong emotions because they will be analyzing the merits and mistakes of people who are alive and even active in Polish national life. Let's try to clear the threshold of future discussions.¹⁰⁵¹

The author's last sentence summarizes very well Polish intellectuals' aim to set up a starting-point for future historical knowledge. It is no coincidence that both Lipski's and Holzer's opinions were actually expressed within their first attempt to approach KOR's and *Solidarność*'s immediate history; even if they considered themselves rather chroniclers than historians in this case, and hence that the phenomenon they were writing about and experiencing first-hand was something yet too recent to be fully assessed, they believed it deserved a place in the country's annals¹⁰⁵².

It happened so in a more general level too, as the following Solidarity poster shows (Figure 16)¹⁰⁵³. At the top, beside the national coat of arms (the white eagle) and in red letters, it says: "Let's not waste this Polish chance" —which reminds us of some of the standpoints of the members of the National Commission analyzed before. At the bottom, in bigger white letters and on a black background, the authors of the placard encouraged Poles "... to live without lies and fear, with honor...". The words "lies" and "fear" are aligned to the right, while "to live" and "with honor" are aligned to the left; a Manichaeian semantic association is thus suggested through the spatial arrangement of the concepts: a real, authentic life cannot do without honor, while a life full of fear and lies is not worth living. Between these two sentences, in smaller red letters and on the left-hand side of *Solidarność*'s logo, an interesting historical comparison is drawn: "as important as Grunwald" (*ważne jak Grunwald*). That is to say, *Solidarność* is waging a "battle" which is implicitly described not only as national¹⁰⁵⁴ and decisive, but also ultimately as victorious.



Figure 16

¹⁰⁵¹ Holzer: *Solidarność...*, 352, my transl. For the development of his reflection, see Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁵² We will go deeper into this in the next part of the chapter.

¹⁰⁵³ Courtesy of Karta Archiwum.

¹⁰⁵⁴ In this case against the new "invaders": the USSR-controlled Communist system.

But what to do until that ultimate victory arrived? How to face forthcoming defeats, like the implementation of Martial Law, and be able to overcome in the end? During the trial against KPN leaders, Romuald Szeremietiew pointed out that the recordings of political prosecutions would eventually become a weapon for the victims of repression and enable remembrance. Thus, the repressed should manage to leave similar traces, some kind of evidence in order for others (or themselves later on) to claim justice and demand accountability, so that at least the effective “winners” didn’t become “hermeneutical winners” too:

We will still say what we say now, it’s registered in the recording tape. We will resort to these tapes in the future, perhaps before too long. But even in the long run, in nine or ten years’ time, there cannot be the slightest doubt as to “who’s who” in this prosecution. We must flourish all the arguments that prove our innocence. I must do so, so that in the future no participant in the prosecution may have the right to say “I didn’t know”. Just like the judges and prosecutors who took part in the shameful trials of Stalinist times frequently said after 1956. In this prosecution there cannot be situations allowing future subterfuges.¹⁰⁵⁵

When certain events were regarded as historical by Polish oppositionists, either in an emancipatory or a catastrophic sense, the first impulse was to give an account of them. Within our time scope, both the formation of Solidarity and the establishment of Martial Law marked a turning point as to the quantity of such records and the urgency of their registration and/or preservation.

Once forced back into the winners’ time *continuum*, so to speak, historicization also became gloomier. Szeremietiew alluded above to Stalinism, whereas Michnik wrote in jail:

For what else happened on the night of December 12/13? “Factories were taken by force. Workers’ organizations were dissolved and decimated with the help of the police. The working class was transformed into an amorphous, apathetic mass devoid of political consciousness. From then on, the government had to deal with individuals and not with organizations. Napoleon was right: it suffices to be stronger at one particular moment.” This is not my assessment of the political situation that followed December 13. These are the words used by Bertold Brecht to describe Hitler’s takeover of Germany. And if WRONa achieves its goals, this is how future historians will write about Poland in the period after December 13, 1981.¹⁰⁵⁶

Still, this was only a possibility. Michnik left the door open to changes in the belief that the Poles had not been yet deprived of their recently-recovered *podmiotowość*, and hence of their power to prevent further catastrophes, though it would have to be channeled otherwise given the increasing repression (see Chapter 2). Democratic opposition’s field of action had been dramatically restricted in the official and open spheres—but underground publishing houses flourished.

“How will history judge this sentence [against KPN]”, Szeremietiew wondered out loud when finishing his speech before the Warsaw Voivodeship Court¹⁰⁵⁷. Especially after December 1981, many understood that the result of “history’s trial” would depend entirely on who managed to recount that currently ongoing history in the long run. As one of the favorite novelists of critical Poles said, “who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past”¹⁰⁵⁸. Oppositionists had to produce, safeguard and spread historical narratives about themselves to counteract Communist authorities’ attempt to return to a monochromatic version of reality.

Paradoxically, history had to be written and settled even before it became history.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Szeremietiew in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 1, my transl.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Michnik: “On Resistance...”, 42.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Szeremietiew in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 9, my transl.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 37.

C) *Historical awareness and historicization of present time (II)*

Die Gefahr droht sowohl dem Bestand der Tradition wie ihren Empfängern. Für beide ist sie ein und dieselbe: sich zum Werkzeug der herrschenden Klasse herzugeben. In jeder Epoche muss versucht werden, die Überlieferung von neuem dem Konformismus abzugewinnen, der im Begriff steht, sie zu überwältigen. Der Messias kommt ja nicht nur als der Erlöser; er kommt als der Überwinder des Antichrist. Nur *dem* Geschichtsschreiber wohnt die Gabe bei, im Vergangenen den Funken der Hoffnung anzufachen, der davon durchdrungen ist: auch die Toten werden vor dem Feind, wenn er siegt, nicht sicher sein. Und dieser Feind hat zu siegen nicht aufgehört.

Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte, These VI"

Poland's destiny is the destiny of each one of us. It is our human destiny. We must defend it like our grandparents and parents did. At any cost. All the mighty of the world: remember this.

Adam Michnik: "Powstanie listopadowe — 'polskie pytania'"

C.1) *History of the present, oppositionists' view of the document and the search for truth and authenticity*

Despite memory and history writing have gone hand in hand in Western cultures since Ancient Greek times, it was especially after the experience of the Holocaust when this relation was brought back into the spotlight of Humanities and Social Sciences, undergoing considerable epistemological re-elaborations. By the late 1970s, a new historiographical trend emerged, albeit with different connotations and methodologies according to each country or school: in France, it was labelled *Histoire du Temps Présent*; in Germany, *Zeitgeschichte*; in English-speaking countries, *Current History* (though it lacks the sociocultural overtones of the two former), whereas in Spain it is usually named *Historia del presente* or *Historia "vívda"*. A third element, identity, was then explicitly incorporated to the history/memory tandem in the collective plane.

Interestingly, something very similar was going on in Poland around the same period of time, though on a different echelon and with diverging implications. In the beginning, Polish oppositionists' "history of the present" was not primarily a historiographical or academic trend, but rather a multi-layered hermeneutical operation or reaction against a threatening enemy; in other words, something that *inteligenci* deemed vital in order to "save" themselves and the critical initiatives they supported.

If we compare it specifically with the French case, we may spot a few resemblances beyond the most evident professional and regime differences (academic-*amateur*, democracy-dictatorship). For instance, both initiatives were based on a renovated notion of "collective memory", that is, on "the recollection or set of recollections —either conscious or not— of an experience which was lived and/or mythologized by a living community", as long as the feeling of the past is an integral part of the latter's identity¹⁰⁵⁹. The goal of such approaches is to depict the history of

¹⁰⁵⁹ HERNÁNDEZ SANDOICA, Elena: *Tendencias historiográficas actuales. Escribir historia hoy*, Madrid, Akal, 2004, 527, my transl. Since many times to translate is to betray, as the old saying goes (*Traduttore, traditore*), I include the original definition in Spanish: "... 'memoria colectiva' sería el

living people in its full complexity; this history would be narrated by its main characters with the historian/history writer's assistance, who would act as a witness and perhaps also as a judge. In addition, in Polish opposition's case the figure of the main character and of the historian would frequently coincide, hence blurring even more the borderline between subject (historian) and "object" (the historical subject-agent), between autobiography and biography.

Strongly empathetic, though conceptually and theoretically vague, this kind of history writing is also specifically linked to the idea of national identity, understood as a binding element which needed to be reinforced. In France, historians of the present contemplated a nation-state betting for rationalism, centralization, laicism and equality, whereas in Polish opposition circles it was the nation claiming for its independence, freedom and rights what prevailed... in spite of a hostile and illegitimate state. National feelings, Bronisław Geremek explained, became then the easiest way for people to defend themselves against the imposition of an ideological scheme which was alien to their historical heritage, as well as to organize and communicate among themselves given the abnormal functioning of public opinion in Eastern Bloc countries:

Rappeler sa propre histoire équivalait à rappeler l'appartenance à une communauté nationale et à s'opposer à la dépendance de l'empire soviétique. Qui plus est, dans le modèle politique imposé aux pays de l'Europe centrale, aucune place n'était faite au fonctionnement normal de l'opinion publique, à la communication entre les gens; la référence au sentiment national devenait alors la forme la plus simple et la plus aisée pour communiquer et s'organiser, et c'est ainsi qu'est apparue le plus aisément la communauté des résistants au système imposé. Violée par ses liens de dépendance à l'égard de l'empire, la souveraineté des nations revendique ses droits. Et ce n'est que normal.¹⁰⁶⁰

Lastly, both Polish and French historians and/or oppositionists contributed actively and openly to political *praxis* through the dissemination of their analyses of the present, converging or clashing in their aims with governmental policies and/or the media. Thus, when intellectuals fixed or stabilized a certain view of the immediate past in their narratives, they were always bearing the future in mind¹⁰⁶¹.

Experience and expectations have become widely accepted as part of the process of history writing¹⁰⁶². As Eric Hobsbawm pointed out at the beginning of the 1980s, the past, the present and the future are always flowing and hence cannot be drastically told apart:

... all prediction about the real world rests to a great extent on some sort of inferences about the future from what has happened in the past, that is to say from history. The historian ought therefore to have something relevant to say about the subject. Conversely, history cannot get away from the future, if only because there is no line which divides the two. What I have just said now belongs to the past. What I am about to say belongs to the future. Somewhere between the two there is a notional but constantly moving point which, if you like, you can call the "present". (...) We cannot ask the past for *direct* answers to any questions which have not already been put to it,

recuerdo o conjunto de recuerdos —bien conscientes o no— de una experiencia vivida y/o *mitificada* por una colectividad que se encuentra *viva*, y de cuya *identidad* forma parte integrante el *sentimiento* del pasado".

¹⁰⁶⁰ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 23.

¹⁰⁶¹ Hernández Sandoica: *Tendencias historiográficas...*, 518-536.

¹⁰⁶² "The insight that the writing of history is less a matter of the unproblematic discovery of a past 'out there' by means of refined techniques of source criticism, and more something dependent upon the context of the present in which questions about the past emerge, has come to be generally accepted". Stráth: "Introduction...", 24; Hernández Sandoica: *Tendencias historiográficas...*, 529-530; HERNÁNDEZ SANDOICA, Elena: *Los caminos de la Historia. Cuestiones de historiografía y método*, Madrid, Síntesis, 1995.

though we can use our ingenuity as historians to read indirect answers into what it has left behind. Conversely, (...) we can ask the present any answerable question, though by the time it is answered and recorded it will also, strictly speaking, belong to the past, albeit the recent past. Nevertheless past, present and future form a continuum.¹⁰⁶³

The subject-agent who is conscious of a mortal peril “is, at the same time, the most threatened one and the single one who can save. The most threatened because he is in on the secret of the power of those who rule, and the one who can save because he has found the right strategy, the hermeneutical battle”¹⁰⁶⁴. Not surprisingly, humanists and historians living within a dictatorship match Reyes Mate’s description particularly well: a better knowledge of the past and some of its secrets or distortions somehow make them superior to the powerful; they can tell who is lying and enjoy a clearer perspective of the all-pervasive oppressive system they are immersed in, which explains in our case why there was quite a large number of opposition activists in academic organs such as Warsaw University’s Historical Institute¹⁰⁶⁵. As it happened with the people and events they recalled, researched about and vindicated, these subject-agents were aware of the danger of being erased from history; therefore, they tried to safeguard their own ideas and actions so that future historians-ragmen didn’t have to look out for the fragments of their defeated experience in the rubbish dump of history.

Before proceeding with Polish opposition’s specific concern about the history-memory-identity triad, documentation and the feeling of catastrophe, it is worth to go a little further back in time to draw attention to two remarkable prior cases. Just like Walter Benjamin “foresaw” and warned about the abyss towards which Nazi Germany was heading full-speed, as well as about the horror of totalitarianisms in general, during the Second World War some groups of outstanding citizens decided to implement a hermeneutical battle in an invaded and devastated Poland: they took up the task of researching, collecting and registering any kind of document concerning the victims or potential victims of Nazism (objects, diaries, personal data and documents, writings, good-bye letters, photographs...) both in order to preserve their memory (and hence their individual and collective identity) and in the hope of being able to tell their story in the future and do justice.

Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-1944), an expert in the history of Polish Jews since the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century, together with many other Polish-Jewish scientists, writers and ordinary people, carried out a secret operation named *Oyneg Shabbos* to gather all the information available about the lives and tragic fate of the rest of their compatriots in the Warsaw Ghetto, including descriptions of the Chełmno and Treblinka extermination camps. Unfortunately, Ringelblum was not able to complete his mission: he was executed with his family while fleeing from the Ghetto, together with the people who concealed them. After the War, a part of the documents collected by *Oyneg Shabbos* was discovered hidden away in milk cans and metal boxes in different cellars of the city’s buildings and among the ruins, which enabled this initiative to be known worldwide and become one of the symbols of the salvage of Jewish people’s memory during the Holocaust¹⁰⁶⁶.

¹⁰⁶³ HOBBSBAWM, Eric J.: “Looking Forward: History and the Future”, in HOBBSBAWM, Eric: *On History*, London, Weindelfeld and Nicolson, 1997 (1981), 37-38.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Mate: *Medianoche...*, 120, my transl.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Meller: “Rola myślenia...”, 252, quoting BLANCO, José Joaquín in PEREYRA, Carlos, VILLORO, Luis *et al.*: *Po co nam historia?* [original: “El placer de la historia”, in *Historia. ¿Para qué?*], Warszawa, PIW, 1985 (1980), 63.

¹⁰⁶⁶ His collection is kept in Warsaw’s Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny): <http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2014-10-08-ringelblum-archive>. Significant publications on the topic include:

If Ringelblum's example is an important theoretical (albeit indirect) precedent for our research topic because it draws Polish recent past, the idea of history and memory cultivated in Jewish tradition and Benjamin's Theses together, the second salvation project developed in occupied Poland connects in practice a past and a present mission through the figure of Władysław Bartoszewski, an important member, as we already know, both of Polish resistance against Nazism and of opposition circles during the PRL regime.

In the War, Bartoszewski contributed to register Nazi crimes against Polish population, Jews and non-Jews alike, and gathered as much information as possible about the victims, so that they didn't fall into oblivion. His notes, accounts and reports about the executions in Warsaw were used as proofs in the Nuremberg trials (1945-1946) and in the complex process against Ludwig Hahn¹⁰⁶⁷, which took place almost three decades later in the German Federal Republic. With his work *Warsaw Death Ring, 1939-1944* (1967)¹⁰⁶⁸, Bartoszewski attempted "to build a monument to many known and unknown victims of the occupation, to show their faces, to remind about the values for which they gave their lives", and explained that "that book was not for me an act of revenge, but a witness of history, a warning for both our nations [Poland and Germany]"¹⁰⁶⁹.

The archive is a key element for any society that wants to keep its memory, traditions and knowledge safe. However, as Olga Zaslavskaya points out, an archive "is not just the bearer of documentation but also a reflection of the needs of its creators, and the purposes behind its creation should be taken in a broader sociopolitical and cultural context"¹⁰⁷⁰. Archives, in sum, do not deal solely, or even mainly, with the past: they are

... a question of future, the question of future itself, (...) of a response, of a promise and a responsibility for tomorrow. If we want to know what the archive wanted to say, we will only know in the time to come. Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in the time to come, soon or perhaps never. A ghostly messianicity¹⁰⁷¹ works on the concept of archive and links it, like religion, like history, like science itself, to a very exceptional experience of promise.¹⁰⁷²

RINGELBLUM, Emanuel: *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej: uwagi i spostrzeżenia* (edition and introduction by Artur Eisenbach), Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1988; *The Ringelblum Archive: annihilation —day by day*, Warsaw, Karta Centre, 2008; KASSOW, Samuel D.: *Who will write our history? Rediscovering a hidden archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*, New York, Vintage Books, 2009; SAKOWSKA, Ruta: *Two forms of resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto —two functions of the Ringelblum Archives*, Jerusalem, [Yad Vashem], 1991; SHAPIRO, Robert Moses and EPSZTEIN, Tadeusz (eds.): *The Warsaw ghetto Oyneq Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: catalog and guide*, Bloomington (Indianapolis), Indiana University Press, 2009. In the Yad Vashem's webpage there is an online exhibition about the Ringelblum archives: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/ringelblum/index.asp>

¹⁰⁶⁷ Commander of the Nazi Security Services of the Warsaw area (November 1941-January 1945). He supervised the transportation of the Ghetto inhabitants to Treblinka and played a leading role in the suppression of Warsaw Uprising in 1944.

¹⁰⁶⁸ BARTOSZEWSKI, Władysław: *Warszawski pierścień śmierci 1939-1944*, Warszawa, Zachodnia Agencja Prasowa, 1967. English translation: *Warsaw Death Ring 1939-1944*, [Warsaw], Interpress Publishers, 1968.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 44, my transl.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Zaslavskaya: "From Dispersed...", 704.

¹⁰⁷¹ In "Marx & Sons", Derrida described this concept in response to his critics and pointing out the similarities and differences with Benjamin's "weak messianic power": "Messianicity (which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe) is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly heterogeneous otherness. Nothing is more 'realistic' or 'immediate' than this messianic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/ that which is coming. (...) [It] is at the same time a waiting without expectation [*une attente sans attente*] (an active preparation,

Already in the midst of the Cold War, cultural and political circles of Western countries were discussing how to deal with all the alternative and opposition materials produced in Central-Eastern Europe that were reaching the West. In April 1971, academics and journalists celebrated a conference in London precisely to discuss about the future of the *samizdat* phenomenon (“Future of Samizdat: Its Significance and Prospects”). It was proposed then that Radio Liberty, which already had an ample and organized *samizdat* collection, could take charge of such documents systematically and set up a centralized archive accessible to researchers. It was also decided that some of those texts should be read and broadcasted in order for them to “return” to the East and reach local audiences. All these records, together with those of Radio Free Europe, became the germ of today’s Open Society Archives (OSA)¹⁰⁷³.

But how to take care of those same materials, as well as of many others, in the countries of origin, in a moment when a change of geopolitical conditions was regarded as very unlikely in the short and medium term?¹⁰⁷⁴

Urged on by the fear of destruction, oblivion or manipulation, Polish critical *inteligencja* also understood that documents had to be elaborated, collected and preserved to safeguard and (pre-)fix their collective memory and identity, especially in the atmosphere of deep uncertainty that spread after December 13th, 1981. Given what had remained of PRL’s printing and publishing facilities during the 1970s in comparison with other Communist countries (machinery, techniques, donations of money and equipment from abroad...), the best and most efficient way to look after what oppositionists deemed important was by recording it, transcribing or writing about it and, most importantly, by publicizing it, for knowledge had to be disseminated as soon as possible.

In addition, the production and distribution of copies of oppositionists’ document-testimonies by the underground press multiplied exponentially their chances of survival. It would be fairly easy for the “winners” to do away with a centralized archive full of original files, but how to get completely rid of thousands or tens of thousands of small, private collections dealing with the most varied experiences and opinions of the

anticipation against the backdrop of a horizon, but also exposure without horizon, and therefore an irreducible amalgam of desire and anguish, affirmation and fear, promise and threat).

Although there is a waiting here, an apparently passive limit to anticipation (I cannot calculate everything, predict and program all that is coming, the future in general, etc., and this limit to calculability or knowledge is also, for a finite being, the condition of praxis, decision, action and responsibility), this exposure to the event, which can either come to pass or not (condition of absolute otherness), is inseparable from a promise and an injunction that call for commitment without delay [*sans attendre*], and, in truth, rule out abstention. (...) ... we have to do here with the most concrete urgency, and the most revolutionary as well. *Anything but Utopian*, messianicity mandates that we interrupt the ordinary course of things, time and history *here-now*; it is inseparable from an affirmation of otherness and justice. As this unconditional messianicity *must* thereafter negotiate its conditions in one or another singular, practical situation, we have to do here with the locus of an analysis and evaluation, and, therefore, of a responsibility”. DERRIDA, Jacques: “Marx & Sons”, in *Ghostly Demarcations: a symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, London, Verso, 1999, 248-249.

¹⁰⁷² DERRIDA, Jacques: *Mal de archivo. Una impresión freudiana*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta, 1997, 44, my transl.

¹⁰⁷³ <http://www.osaarchivum.org/>

¹⁰⁷⁴ Zaslavskaya: “From Dispersed...”, 685, mentioning BOITER, Albert: “Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs” *Russian Review*, 31(3), 1972, 282-285. For the changes that took place after 1989 in Polish history writing with the access to PZPR’s and Security Services’ documents, see Persak: “Otwarcie archiwów...” and PERSAK, Krzysztof: “Rola archiwów w konsolidacji demokracji i rozrachunku z przeszłością (tezy)”, in *Sprawiedliwość okresu transformacji...*, 4-7, both in http://www.hfhr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/tunezja_pl.pdf

“defeated” since the 1940s, hidden or passed on in the most unusual places and through the most ingenious means?

Beyond this, the written form involves leaving a mark on the world. According to some authors, such materialization of the human struggle against the course of time builds stronger and more emotive bonds with tradition than the oral form. Writing compels us to reflect on what is worth preserving of tradition and what isn’t, and on how to harmonize tradition with contemporary procedures¹⁰⁷⁵. It is a way of defeating death, of defeating defeat, and hence the favorite means of intellectuals to attain posterity. We come full circle in this sense with Bartoszewski’s reference to the importance of writing and books in Jewish culture, in connection with his concerns about transcendence: “Perhaps not much will be left after I die. Surely I have achieved too little. But I value very much printed word. In this respect I think similarly to Jews, who believe in books, in what wisdom and reason have transferred to paper. My experience and the experience of my nation tell me that much of that will remain”¹⁰⁷⁶.

The appeal of twentieth-century national history in Poland, the most hushed up and distorted by authorities, led to an increasing interest in documents of the past within underground and émigré publications. Besides bearing the problem of documental preservation in mind, independent publishing houses believed that a good way to increase their fame and reach larger audiences would be to offer readers alluring, little-known documents or archival material hitherto unheard of. Such strategy tried to satisfy simultaneously popular demands, the wishes of readers with more specific interests and the ambitions of intellectual and scientific authors. Collected documentations about a given event, process, historical figure or period were published as monographs, while in some journals like Parisian Kultura’s *Zeszyty Historyczne* there were fixed sections devoted to reprinting and popularizing past sources. The majority of these dealt with pieces of knowledge that had been condemned in or excluded from official channels: public life in the Second Republic, foreign affairs (especially Polish-Soviet relations), pre-war politics and the structure of Polish governments during World War II, programs and activities of political parties or of anti-Communist groups belonging either to the military and political underground or to legal Postwar opposition, information about Polish Communist Party in its different phases or about its leaders, the establishment of Communist system in the first Postwar years and, last but not least, the vicissitudes of dissident and opposition initiatives up until the illegalization of *Solidarność*¹⁰⁷⁷.

Memories and diaries written by former “defeated” and victims of repression also became an important and popular part of “source publications”: the Poles living in the USSR after September 1939, people engaged in conspiracy and resistance during and after the Second World War, famous military commanders, members of the still legal

¹⁰⁷⁵ Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 23 and 27, quoting RIESMAN, David: “Tradycja oralna a słowo pisane”, in GODLEWSKI, Grzegorz, MENCWEL, Andrzej and SULIMA, Roch (oprac.): *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2004, 397, CHARTIER, Roger: “Labourers and Voyagers. From the Text to the Reader”, in FINKELSTEIN, David and MCCLEERY, Alistair (eds.): *The Book History Reader*, London/New York, 2002, 47, and VLADISLAV, Jan: “Incendiary Books”, *Index on Censorship*, no. 4, 1983, 3.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Bartoszewski: *Jesień nadziei...*, 48, my transl.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Some of *Zeszyty historyczne*’s sections were named “Dokumenty” [Documents], “Wspomnienia” [Memories], “Okruchy historii” [The crumbs of history] and “Ci, co odeszli” [Those who have gone]. The latter was devoted to brief biographical sketches of recently deceased political émigrés and former AK soldiers, like Stanisław Szabunia or Lucjan Krawiec. Somehow, those who had gone were brought back or invoked through remembrance.

postwar parties, the repressed in the USSR or by Polish Security Services, made themselves “heard” in black and white decades after their tragic experience¹⁰⁷⁸.

Such way of providing historical knowledge or documents, with as few personal or academic comments as possible on the part of the compiler or publisher, is described by Magdalena Mikołajczyk as “propaganda of facts” (*propaganda faktów*)¹⁰⁷⁹. That is, far from perceiving documents as monuments and approaching to them critically, like Jacques Le Goff suggested in one of his essays¹⁰⁸⁰, opposition media frequently used them and conceived them as proofs in themselves that needed no further explanations or additions¹⁰⁸¹. They shared, in sum, a positivistic view of the source:

The document that, for the positivistic historical school of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, was the foundation of the historical fact, seems to be presented as historical evidence though it is the result of a choice, of a decision made by the historian. It seems to possess an objectivity that sets up against the intentionality of the monument. Besides this, it essentially takes the form of a written testimony. (...)

The intervention of the historian who chooses the document, pulling it out from the pile of data of the past, preferring it to others, attributing to it the value of a testimony that depends at least partially on one’s position in the society of the time and on its mental arrangement, is grafted on to an initial condition which is even less “neutral” than his intervention. The document is not innocuous. Above all, it is the result of a conscious or unconscious assembly of history, of the period and the society that produced it, but also of the following periods during which it has continued living, forgotten perhaps, during which it has continued being manipulated despite the silence. (...) The document is monument. It is the result of the strain fulfilled by historical societies to impose on the future —intentionally or not— the self-image they provide of themselves. There is no document-truth. Each document is a lie. It is the historian’s task not to feign ingenuity.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁷⁸ A few well-known examples: ANDERS, Władysław: *Bez ostatniego rozdziału. Wspomnienie z lat 1939-1946*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo “Margines”, 1984 (1949); MIKOŁAJCZYK, Stanisław: *Polska zgwaltowana*, 2 vols. [Cracow], Biblioteka Obserwatora Wojennego, [1986]; NIETYKSZA, Bronisław: *Nadzieje, złudzenia, rzeczywistość: wspomnienia z lat 1912-1945*, vol. 1, Warszawa, Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1985; NIETYKSZA, Bronisław: *Niespełnione nadzieje. Wspomnienia wybrane 1945-1988*, Warszawa, Rytm, 1990; JEZIORAŃSKI, Zdzisław [pseud. Jan Nowak]: *Kurier z Warszawy*, London, Odnova, 1978; ZAREMBA, Zygmunt: *Wspomnienia: pokolenie przełomu*, Cracow/ Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1983; ZAREMBA, Zygmunt: *Powstanie sierpniowe*, [Warszawa], Nadzieja, [ca 1985, published for the first time in the international press in 1944, altogether in 1946]. Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 25-28; Sowiński: *Zakazana książka...*, 262.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 32.

¹⁰⁸⁰ LE GOFF, Jacques: “Documento/Monumento”, in LE GOFF, Jacques: *El orden de la memoria. El tiempo como imaginario*, Barcelona/ Buenos Aires/ México, Editorial Paidós, 1991, 227-239.

¹⁰⁸¹ For example, Adam Michnik argued that the book about *Endecja* edited by Barbara Toruńczyk [*National Democracy: An Anthology of the Political Thought from ‘Przegląd Wszechpolski’ (1895-1905)*, London, Aneks, 1983 (1981)] was “wise because it allows the original texts to speak for themselves”. Michnik: “Conversation in the Citadel”, 282. Some examples of collected documents and testimonies about Communist times, more or less commented: *Gomułka i inni. Dokumenty z Archiwum KC 1948-1982*, (introduction and notes by J. Andrzejewski, i.e. Andrzej Paczkowski), Warszawa, Krag, 1986; *Od października 1956 do grudnia 1970. Materiały z dziejów Polski 1945-1980*, Warszawa, ON/ Wydawnictwo Społeczne KOS, 1984-1987 (various volumes of the collection *Zeszyty Edukacji Narodowej*); PODGÓRSKA, W. and TURLEJSKA, Maria [pseud. Wąsowicz, W. and Socha, Ł.]: *Historia najnowsza —z archiwum Bolesława Bieruta: protokół otwarcia kas zawierających dokumenty po Bolesławie Bierucie i dokumenty przekazane przez Jakuba Bermana*, Wydawnictwo Z., [b.m. 1983]; Turlejska: *Te pokolenia...*

¹⁰⁸² Le Goff: “Documento/Monumento”, 228 and 237, my transl. See also CONTRERAS CONTRERAS, Jaime: “Métodos y fuentes: el historiador y sus documentos”, en *La investigación y las fuentes documentales de los archivos / [I y II Jornadas sobre Investigación en Archivos]*, vol. I, Guadalajara, ANABAD Castilla-La Mancha, Asociación de Amigos del Archivo Histórico Provincial, 1996, 181-194; TOPOLSKI, Jerzy: “Źródła historyczne a narracja historyczna”, in Topolski: *Jak się pisze...*, 279-281; KOLBUSZEWSKA, Jolanta and STOBIECKI Rafał (eds.): *Historyk wobec źródeł. Historiografia*

Rather than a question of pretended naïveté, in the Polish case such an idea of what documents could offer was connected to previous Communist malpractices concerning history and historical knowledge, witnessed or experienced first-hand by many students and academics who later became members of intellectual opposition.

After the enormous losses and devastation produced by the Second World War in the educational field (annihilation of *inteligencja*, destruction of buildings, cultural and documentary heritage...), the first Postwar years were devoted to reconstruction and to the creation of new institutions with the support of the Communist-controlled provisional State (1944-1948). Marxism was not yet predominant in intellectual and cultural life, but an increase in the number of works dealing with social and economic history in detriment of political history could already be spotted, as well as of researches on Polish-German relations with a strong anti-German tone.

During the full-fledged Stalinist era that came next, Communist authorities pursued the transformation of Polish historical studies following the Soviet model (1949-1956). It was the summit of historical materialism and of a deterministic approach based in theory (and quite paradoxically) on objectivity and factual materials (*faktografia*). Along those years, historiography became increasingly teleological and ideologized, and academics began to be pressed or attacked to make them be loyal to the Party. Some committed with the Communist cause, either truly convinced or out of opportunism (to be eligible for promotions, etc.), while others tried to adapt minimally to what was perceived as a hopeless situation after the elimination of political opposition and the fake elections of 1947. On the other hand, those who spoke out their disagreement and wished to keep their independence were excluded.

However, the harshest remodeling attempts only lasted seven years, and the changes achieved at university level were neither complete nor broad or profound, unlike in other Eastern Bloc countries like Czechoslovakia. Despite pressures or the isolated position that some academics were forced into, it is important to note that a good deal of pre-war professors who survived the 1939-1945 period were not purged, but remained in their old posts. This implied that a certain tradition combining intellectual and professional ethos together with resistance and national consciousness also prevailed in higher education, which favored the creation of spheres of dissent and social pressure from the mid-1950s onwards¹⁰⁸³.

Aimed at justifying, legitimizing and giving a positive meaning to Poland's sociopolitical turn after 1944-1948, the "history-propaganda" lessons delivered in Polish classrooms and lecture rooms along PRL times consisted of three basic, recurrent elements with variable degrees of application, according to Bronisław Baczko. Firstly, the Communist present had to be seen as an economic, political and social improvement; furthermore: as the culmination of a long-pursued goal, and hence a clear rupture with a poorly considered recent past. New symbols and rituals needed to be established in order distinguish the new system from previous stages and regimes of Polish history.

Nevertheless, not everything could be based on novelty: some historical continuity had to be provided too, in the second place. The roots of today's Poland —a

klasyczna i nowe propozycje metodologiczne, Łódź, Ibidem, 2010, especially KOLBUSZEWSKA, Jolanta: "Koncepcja źródła w XIX-wiecznej klasycznej historiografii", 13-21.

¹⁰⁸³ Górny: "From the Splendid Past...", 108-109; Grabski: *Zarys historii...*, 201, 204-207; Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 125-128; Bak: "La révision...", 164-166; RUTKOWSKI, Tadeusz Paweł: *Nauki historyczne w Polsce 1944-1970. Zagadnienia polityczne i organizacyjne*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007, 23-343; CONNELLY, John: *Captive University. The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956*, Chapel Hill & London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

country with new borders, less territories and a much more nationally homogeneous population— were tracked down in the Polish Medieval kingdom ruled by the Piast dynasty¹⁰⁸⁴, in detriment of the early modern, multinational and expansive state of the Jagiellonian dynasty. Legitimacy was sought too through the reinterpretation of some historical processes and events, especially those that hadn't aroused much curiosity before in Polish academia: in modern times, of course, the labor and Communist movements, and in earlier times ancient peasant revolts, anti-Catholic and lay traditions, with a view to finding national precedents of the former. Given the will of promoting a progressive view of history, social and national reformers of the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods were regarded with interest as well. However, Polish nobility's dominion and the Catholic Church's influence were heavily criticized, and each past defeat or decadence period was ascribed to the selfishness and class ambitions of the aristocrats and rich owners. On the other hand, nineteenth-century national uprisings were either condemned in the name of a "sensible" political conservatism (incarnated, for instance, by Aleksander Wielopolski) or reinterpreted as attempts of progressive social revolutions against the formation of a bourgeois capitalist society.

Lastly, the third element of Communist historical indoctrination was based on the legitimization of present-day PRL relations with the Soviet Union, touted as an alliance and friendship between equals, plus the only guarantee for Polish independence, instead of a relationship emanating from Poland's political, military and economic dependence on Moscow. Past conflicts between Poles and Russians were explained otherwise or simply omitted, while the common struggle of the labor movement was highlighted. Geopolitically speaking, Germany was seen as Poland's past and present major enemy and a strong anti-German feeling was encouraged.

In order to understand national history as a *continuum* logically leading to socialist Poland, many periods and events had to be rejected, "forgotten" or "erased" in official annals. Thus, part of the past, Baczek explained, had to be "confiscated" in the hope that, in time, it became "non-existent". This was especially evident with Polish history since Partition times: it was not an easy task, for instance, to ignore the fact that a considerable part of Poland's culture and national identity had been built upon Catholicism and, most importantly, in opposition to Russian dominion —though it was argued that Bolshevism had, after all, caused the downfall of the tsarist imperialist regime. A pro-Soviet perspective was also implemented in the interpretation of other topics, such as the October 1917 revolution or the Polish-Soviet War (1920). However, it was far more complicated to provide alternative explanations to the annexation of Eastern Polish territories due to the secret Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the murders of Polish communists in Soviet prisons or gulags, the Katyń woods massacre, the Stalinist terror era or the repeated workers' revolts and crises since 1956; among other reasons, because the Poles who had lived through those experiences or witnessed them were still alive. Therefore, many twentieth-century events, including the much despised Second Republic epoch, became taboo issues in official historiography and, as a result, the past, memory and identity of several generations was either distorted or cut out during decades from public historical narratives, producing so-called "blank spots" (*białe plamy*)¹⁰⁸⁵.

¹⁰⁸⁴ A Communist adaptation, by the way, of National Democracy's historical interpretation during the interwar period.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Baczek: "Polska Solidarność...", 109-111; Grabski: *Zarys historii...*, 202-203, 209-219, 223-227; Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 65-66, 125, 128-136; Górny: "From the Splendid Past...", 105, 109-111; GÓRNY, Maciej: *Przede wszystkim ma być naród. Marksistowskie historiografie w Europie*

Already during the harshest period of Communist historical policies, some history students and future dissidents ran up against the wall that PRL regime had built around contemporary Polish history. The multiple difficulties and discouragements encountered on their way made many change their minds and choose a different epoch or country to research about. Jerzy Holzer, who continued researching about modern times, explained later that he didn't want to write his master thesis about the labor movement because its history "was especially distorted". Therefore, out of self-preservation instinct (*instynkt zachowawczy*), he decided instead to study the political activity of one of the most important interwar organizations representing the Polish industry, the Central Union of Polish Industry, Mining, Trade and Finances (a.k.a. "Lewiatan"). However, after finishing his Ph.D. thesis on the Polish Socialist Party—a topic of which his supervisor, Żanna Kormanowa¹⁰⁸⁶, did not want to take charge—he switched to universal history because there wasn't so much ideological pressure as in national history, and focused on German parties and masses before Hitler's arrival to power¹⁰⁸⁷.

Holzer's opposition colleague, Bronisław Geremek, experienced a similar disappointment with contemporary history since his first university year. He was resolved to specialize in this field until he clashed with the Stalinist ideology of his contemporary history professor. As his first task in the subject, he had to work on the Communist Manifesto; but after commenting in class that Marx had been too influenced by Proudhon's anarchist thought, and therefore acknowledging he had a weakness, there followed two hours of criticism and incomprehension against him. Overwhelmed by such an unfriendly and quite "un-academic" reaction, Geremek realized that contemporary history was completely politicized at university, so he decided to flee to an area in which he could think at ease, for he believed that historical materialism (which he actually applied along his professional career) should be a freely-chosen methodological approach, never an imposition:

À l'époque du stalinisme, l'histoire a été le refuge de mon existence. Lorsque j'ai entrepris des études d'histoire, je pensais m'occuper du XXe siècle. Mais lorsque, à la fin de la première année, je me suis inscrit au séminaire d'histoire contemporaine, je suis tombé sur un enseignant qui représentait le type de pensée stalinienne le plus classique. Après quelques séances, j'ai compris que j'étouffais. J'ai fui au plus loin, là où il n'y avait pas de références politiques simples et de consignes impératives, là où l'on pouvait réfléchir à peu près librement.¹⁰⁸⁸

[Dans le séminaire d'histoire contemporaine, C.A.] ... le professeur m'a donné comme sujet de mon premier travail le Manifeste du Parti communiste. J'étudie donc comment s'est formé le document; j'étudie les débats idéologiques de l'époque et je fais mon 'topo', j'ai fait mon exposé au séminaire, et j'ai dit entre autres: 'Marx a eu la faiblesse d'aller trop vers l'anarchie, sous l'influence de Proudhon'. Quoi! Comment! Marx a eu une faiblesse? Nous étions en 1950. Je me rappelle le séminaire, les deux heures d'incompréhension; ensuite, j'ai compris que j'allais étouffer si je continuais. Ça continué tout de même quelques mois, et j'ai vu qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une façon de comprendre, d'une approche intellectuelle, mais qu'il s'agissait d'un emprisonnement idéologique et politique. J'ai fait mon choix et

Środkowo-Wschodniej, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Trio, 2007, 208-229, 287-396, 403-407; Bak: "La revisión...", 164-166.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Żanna Kormanowa (1900-1988) was a Communist activist, publicist and historian who specialized in the history of the labor movement. She headed the Department of Educational and School Reform in the Provisional Government of National Unity's Ministry of Education (1945-1948) and was a researcher of Warsaw University's Institute of History since 1947. She also worked in the History branch at the Soviet-inspired Institute for the Formation of Scientific Cadres, within the PZPR's Central Committee (1950-1957). A Communist hardliner, she supported a Marxist transformation of all disciplines and scientific institutions. A detailed biographical and historiographical analysis of her works in Stobiecki, Rafał: "Żanna Kormanowa. Szkic do portretu", in Stobiecki: *Historiografia PRL...*, 254-272.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Holzer's interview: "Nie przeżyłem...", in Bajer: *Bliźny...*, 63-64, my transl.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 108.

j'ai fait le meilleur choix possible, à l'époque, parce que le Moyen Age me donnait d'abord la garantie de la liberté; si je ne touchais pas aux rapports polono-russes au Moyen Age, je pouvais tout lire, tout écrire; et la censure n'avait rien à faire là-dedans.¹⁰⁸⁹

J'étais alors marxiste, en ce sens que je voyais dans le marxisme l'inspiration des recherches historiques. Je continue à penser que, pour l'histoire comme pour la pensée historique, cette inspiration était importante. Les opinions imposées étaient un poison pour la science, mais l'école de pensée sur l'histoire s'est avérée particulièrement fructueuse, et, pour ce qui est de l'époque médiévale, l'indépendance de l'historien restait très grande. C'était mon aire de liberté.¹⁰⁹⁰

Thus, either all of a sudden or little by little, the scales fell from some young intellectuals' eyes since the 1950s. Holzer, for instance, had found Marxism initially appealing because of its seemingly universal character—it looked like a method that could be implemented in almost any sphere of human life. Due to his interest in political history, he attended Żanna Kormanowa's seminar, and there he realized that the theory didn't quite fit the practice: "[Kormanowa] taught us really well how to analyze sources", he remembered, "but afterwards, after such a thorough analysis, she tried to build totally fantastic ideological interpretations—beyond source material. We already perceived back then the absurdity of such behavior, besides our complete engagement"¹⁰⁹¹.

Among Communist history professors like Kormanowa, Celina Bobińska, Adam Schaff, Marian Serejski or Witold Łukaszewicz, the search for the "objective truth" and the subordination of history to Communist ideology and Party were not regarded as contradictory actions¹⁰⁹². However, for students like Holzer, to stick to the facts provided by historical sources only to move on to distortion or invention minutes later raised worrying professional and ethical doubts.

Travelling abroad thanks to scholarships, especially to Western countries, became another means of personally discovering PRL's manipulations and use of stereotypes. In Holzer's case, his stay in Western Germany while writing his Ph.D. dissertation made the difference: "... that year in the GFR had an enormous influence on my relation with Germany—I became convinced that all our propaganda against the Federal Republic is false"¹⁰⁹³.

An outstanding specialist in intellectual history involved in opposition movements, Jerzy Jedlicki, admitted in an interview with Magdalena Bajer that, although he disliked from the beginning the intrusion of the Communist Party in people's private life and behavior, in his youth he succumbed to the idea that his conscience and rightful doubts were simply a weakness, a product of Polish *inteligencja*'s immaturity and a bourgeois burden, a belief that made him stifle his critical thoughts for some time. However, not long afterwards he checked for himself the contradictions and dishonesty of PRL regime through history writing, and that became the straw that broke the camel's back in his estrangement from Communist ideology.

While writing reviews of historical books for *Trybuna Ludu*, Jedlicki had the chance to compare the compilation of documents about the history of the Polish socialist movement, edited and published by the Central Committee of the PZPR and accessible to everybody, with the first-published sources, which were not so easy to get hold of. Thus, he confirmed the rumors about the former volumes not being trustworthy

¹⁰⁸⁹ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 15.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 108.

¹⁰⁹¹ Holzer in "Nie przeżyłem...", in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 59-60, my transl.

¹⁰⁹² Górny: *Przed wszystkim...*, 209.

¹⁰⁹³ Holzer in "Nie przeżyłem...", in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 65, my transl.

at all: "... I became convinced that they were full to the brim with falsehoods. They [the Department of History of the Party within PZPR's Central Committee] erased, added, modified, so that it [the original document] matched present-day doctrine. I still didn't know Orwell's *1984*, but I was already a bit of a historian and my hair stood on end"¹⁰⁹⁴. He tried then to tell about his findings and to criticize this policy from within the PZPR, in the self-criticism fashion they had been taught as Party members. But his article, entitled "Truth and falseness in historical science" ("Prawda i fałsz w nauce historycznej"), was never published in *Trybuna Ludu*, nor in *Po Prostu*, the most critical journal published openly, where the text was subject to censorship. Such reaction "... discouraged me", Jedlicki reflected many decades later, "especially as a historian, for whom the document is something sacred. One may write what one likes in the end, in articles or monographs, though there are limits too, but to falsify documents? A party that alters its own past! And the duplicity of these people, who don't want to admit what they did under no circumstances"¹⁰⁹⁵.

These reminiscences of dissidents follow a similar narrative pattern which is linked to a shared perception of what an *intelligent* should be like: a personal encounter with the truth, i.e. with Communist regime's dark side and manipulation attempts, made them feel bewildered or at a loss, so that they eventually broke away with their previous political beliefs and trust in the Polish Workers' Party and the PRL system, but not with their ethical convictions. Rather than considering themselves fully conscious actors while remaining faithful to Communism, *inteligenci* saw themselves as victims of deception or of their own ingenuity, though, as we have previously seen with Geremek's case, this didn't mean they didn't feel a certain degree of guilt for having supported the dictatorship. The process of *credulity and deceit > realization through personal experience > disorientation > rupture* was regarded by those who experienced it, or who adjusted their own richer and divergent experience to this standardized pattern, as an important landmark or even a turning point in their biographies. In spite of the fact that, in their view, their "essence" or innermost collective and individual identity—connected to values and attitudes—had remained practically intact, now their previously sterile efforts were being channeled in a new direction and towards a new project. In sum, through the decision of forming or becoming part of an opposition movement, Poland's problems and possible solutions were seen from a different angle, and intellectuals' lives acquired a new sense (or recovered its old "betrayed" sense) full of different hopes and fears.

Thus, not only PRL's repression against the workers in the mid-1970s was regarded by *inteligencja* as a "moral outrage" that compelled them to act¹⁰⁹⁶. To check that official historical narratives failed to tell the truth and that historiographical practice was used as a political tool caused a similar reaction and changed the way that intellectuals approached not just to history and its sources, but to public life in general. Hence their insistence in demanding the truth from authorities while trying to spread the truth themselves and tell what hadn't been told before (the *białe plamy*), both through their researches and writings and from an oppositional point of view. There were basically three different means of doing this: by elaborating a counter-history that did not aim to be impartial and tended to oversimplifications, by betting on impartiality and a "scientific method" as much as possible, like Krystyna Kersten, Maria Turlejska or

¹⁰⁹⁴ Jedlicki in "Nie marksizm mnie uwiódł...", in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 85, my transl. Also 83-84.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Jedlicki in "Nie marksizm mnie uwiódł...", in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 85, my transl.

¹⁰⁹⁶ The expression "moral outrage" is used by Michael Bernhard. Bernhard: *The Origins of Democratization...*, 77.

Jerzy Holzer did, for instance, or by analyzing a topic from different angles in essays or op-ed articles¹⁰⁹⁷.

It is very likely that this kind of early experiences of discovery of truth and falseness in academia fueled dissidents' fear of manipulation and made them take a firm stand against historical misrepresentations, or interpretations in general. Therefore, many rejected Communists' historical practice, but not the nineteenth-century historiographical theory it was based on—which was, of course, neither a Marxist invention nor such an “objective” way to study sources as it was initially believed. In any case, positivistic *faktografia* (that is, the description of facts or exhibition of sources without further analyses, elucidations or generalizations) became a very popular approach to both past and present in opposition circles and media.

Intellectuals' reaction against an unsatisfying and tainted version of reality made them try to “dig up” part of the truth that had been buried in the rubbish dump of history. “I decided to write my doctoral thesis about the PPS”, Holzer explained, “and that was already a totally conscious desire to make PPS return to Polish history, to reveal the truth about this party, to clear its memory from various falsities”¹⁰⁹⁸. In order to do this, one had to leave interpretations aside and go back to the essentials, to sources: “It was a return to a kind of, I would say, basic research, to analyses based on an honest gathering of material...”¹⁰⁹⁹. Some *inteligenci* (as we will see next) expected that elaborations on those gathered documents would come later, especially concerning recent or still ongoing opposition initiatives, and limited themselves to do the groundwork which forthcoming generations would profit from in more favorable circumstances. Fact literature or the “propaganda of facts” was associated to greater “purity”, to a “cleaner” or non-manipulated testimony of the past—at least not manipulated in present time.

In Poland, the truth turned into a political value the moment that an opposition group accused authorities (the State, the Communist Party...) of lying and deceiving, so that professional and collective intellectual ethics was transferred to a broader field of political struggle and commitment. From intellectual oppositionists' and dissidents' point of view, their “side” strived to look for the truth while the “other side”, holding power unlawfully, attempted to conceal it or use to its own advantage. This took to a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, the theoretical rejection of politics as a corrupted practice helped *inteligenci* to redefine their identity in opposition to what the Communist government represented to them (discouragement, disappointment, distrust, fear); on the other hand, the search for truth in the recent past involved taking a stand against governmental historical policies, and thus a way of making politics, whether they acknowledged it or not¹¹⁰⁰. Bo Stráth explains this connection between history and politics as follows:

History has a criticising, deconstructing function as well as one of legitimation and construction, and any denial that this is the case, by arguing that history is independent of politics, is itself a political gesture. The legitimating function, in turn, requires that history is conferred the status of a science. The solution to this problem is not to deny the political dimension, which would be a form

¹⁰⁹⁷ Grabski: *Zarys historii...*, 240-242; Romek: *Cenzura a nauka...*, 299-325, esp. 313-325.

¹⁰⁹⁸ “Nie przeżyłem...”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 63, my transl.

¹⁰⁹⁹ “Nie przeżyłem...”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 62, my transl.

¹¹⁰⁰ Václav Havel defined this way of making politics “from below” as “anti-political politics”. HAVEL, Václav: “Politics and Conscience”, *Salisbury Review*, 2, January 1985. Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 6, 225-229; Christian and Droit: “Écrire l’histoire...”, 120.

of crypto-politics, but to recognise it and try to find its specific role in a general division of labour, a role which could preliminarily be called proto-politics.¹¹⁰¹

In relation with the search of truth and being consistent with such pursuit, authenticity became an important feature within intellectuals' public identity in contrast to Communist authorities' negative and vilified image. Jerzy Holzer, who did not leave the PZPR until 1979 in spite of the fact that his dilemmas went back to 1968, told Magdalena Bajer that when he decided to return his Party card he was "engaged, since not very long ago, in several illegal activities", but that he "didn't want to go on living in a false double situation"¹¹⁰². A professional and ethical value coming from humanistic studies, to remain as faithful as possible to the truth, became a fundamental element in critical movement's politics and made oppositionists look trustworthy to a considerable part of Polish population, as Geremek remembered:

... il ne suffit pas de mépriser les falsificateurs, il faut parler contre eux. Il faut dire la vérité. Et en Europe centrale, les historiens se sont trouvés dans une situation très spéciale. L'histoire était à la fois refuge de la vérité et discours sur la vérité. On compte beaucoup d'historiens dans la vie publique en Europe postcommuniste; quelle peut être la cause? La cause n'est pas seulement qu'ils comprennent peut-être un peu mieux l'événement et les choses, elle est surtout que dans les sociétés totalitaires la vérité est le message politique par excellence. Et les historiens se trouvaient engagés dans la résistance au régime, non seulement par devoir civique, mais aussi par attachement au code déontologique de leur profession. S'ils disaient la vérité, ils disposaient d'une certaine confiance.¹¹⁰³

Authenticity had two different meanings or levels in this context: firstly, the positivistic/*faktograficzny* acceptance of a source or document as authentic, i.e. as non-manipulated or falsified, and hence as a proof of good faith¹¹⁰⁴; and secondly, but certainly more important, the right to live an authentic life, to be truthful to oneself and to one's idiosyncrasy despite the obstacles that had to be overcome (political constraints, lack of freedom of expression, etc.)¹¹⁰⁵.

¹¹⁰¹ Stráth: "Introduction...", 45-46.

¹¹⁰² "Nie przeżyłem...", in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 67, my transl., also 62-63, 66.

¹¹⁰³ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 128, also 149.

¹¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, vol. 53 of *Zeszyty historyczne*, where a letter written by Charles de Gaulle about Poland (1919) was published. The question of its authenticity seemed to be the sole concern of the brief editors' text preceding the document, no other additions or comments are made. "Nieznany list de Gaulle'a o Polsce", *Zeszyty historyczne*, vol. 53, 1980, 227-229. Also Le Goff: "Documento/Monumento", 236.

¹¹⁰⁵ This is closely related to Havel's formula of "living in truth" in his work "The Power of the Powerless". HAVEL, Václav: "The Power of the Powerless", in KEANE, John (ed.): *The Power of the Powerless. Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, Armonk, N.Y., M.E. Sharpe, 1985 (1978). Falk: *The Dilemmas...*, 204-208. Zbigniew Bujak said the following about the impact that Havel's essay caused in the factory where he worked, shortly before becoming one of *Solidarność*'s leaders:

"This essay reached us in the Ursus factory in 1979 at a point when we felt we were at the end of the road (...). We had been speaking on the shop floor, talking to people, participating in public meetings, trying to speak the truth about the factory, the country, and politics. There came a moment when people thought that we were crazy. Why were we doing this? Why were we taking such risks? Not seeing any immediate and tangible results, we began to doubt the purposefulness of what we were doing. Shouldn't we be coming up with other methods, other ways?

Then came the essay by Havel. Reading it gave us the theoretical underpinnings for our activity. It maintained our spirits; we did not give up, and a year later — in August 1980 — it became clear that the party apparatus and the factory management were afraid of us. We mattered. And the rank and file saw us as leaders of the movement. When I look at the victories of Solidarity, and of Charter 77, I see in them an astonishing fulfillment of the prophecies and knowledge contained in Havel's essay". Quoted from Havel's *Open Letters. Selected Writings 1963-1990*, New York, Knopf, 1991, 125-126.

In sum, Polish opposition's elaboration of a history of the present, plus the ensuing production and collection of sources, was a sociopolitical and hermeneutical counteraction based on or inspired in positivistic premises which, in the dissidents' case, stemmed from a shared experience of discovery of truth—that is to say, of the repressive and deceitful character of the PRL regime they had previously supported. Such intellectual realization transcended *inteligencja*'s professional or academic spheres and led to (or justified) a firmer political stance and oppositional activity, in order to prevent a similar distortion of present time—and therefore of the development of opposition movements and their own biographies—by Communist authorities in the future.

C.2) Making past and present retrievable. The elaboration and preservation of Polish opposition's recent history and the value of present-day documents and testimonies

As many others before them, Polish critical *inteligenci* believed that the elaboration and preservation of memory could be achieved through the elaboration and preservation of written documents; especially, as in their case, when they perceived that their way of life, their victories and the changes they promoted were in jeopardy. Even if defeat was once again around the corner and couldn't be prevented, oppositionists felt it was their duty to leave traces so that others could find about their particular collective history in the future, reading between the lines of the palimpsest—which should be, first of all, acknowledged as such. Just like the spirit of the “defeated by death” survived and was breathed into the living “defeated” (those who threw in the towel, accepted the new regime or were persuaded by it, plus the generations born during and after the War), the experience of *Solidarność* and previous opposition initiatives should be fixed not just in the memory of people, so that it could be eventually “rediscovered” and remembered, but also engraved in their expectations, so that their ideas and struggle for freedom could be taken up and reinterpreted once more after performing *a tiger's leap into the past* within the process of recovery of the Poles' dignity and *podmiotowość*¹¹⁰⁶.

“Contrary to the usual ideas about the impossibility of writing ongoing history due to the inaccessibility to many sources and the lack of so-called distance”, Tadeusz Łepkowski argued that “the history of the revolution of 1980, and hence of what happened in Poland in 1980-1982, can be written, and not just following the conventions of chronicles”¹¹⁰⁷.

He himself did not take charge of such a task systematically, but nevertheless led his readers to the doors of August 1980 after a walk through Polish modern history in his essay *Myśli o historii Polski i Polaków*, where the highlighted components of

Interestingly, and besides the political component, this reminds of the way that modern American artists understood their profession too, as Michael Kammen explained in his work *Meadows of Memory*: “The most common synonym for truth, however, and a key to comprehending its recurrent meaning in the artists' minds, is the word «authenticity»”. The painter Edward Hopper wrote in 1933 that “«My aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature»”. Although Hopper conceded the inevitability of subjectivism, he determined, nonetheless, to seek authenticity within the inescapable constraints of subjectivism”. KAMMEN, Michael: *Meadows of Memory. Images of Time and Tradition in American Art and Culture*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1992, XV-XVI, quoting GOLDWATER, Robert and TREVES, Marco (comps.): *Artists on art, from the XIV to the XX century. 100 illustrations*, [New York], Pantheon Books, [1945].

¹¹⁰⁶ BUGAJEWSKI, Maciej: “Świadek historii”, in Kolbuszewska and Stobiecki (eds.): *Historyk wobec źródeł...*, 107-114.

¹¹⁰⁷ Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 58, my transl.

contemporary Polishness (long-lasting dependence, the position between East and West, Russia and Germany, different characters and idiosyncrasies of social groups) seemed to converge or reach their zenith in Solidarity times.

It was easier to write the history of Polish opposition movements if the author had some previous knowledge about the aforementioned groups and enjoyed a privileged access to certain sources and pieces of information; that is, if he or she actually belonged to opposition. The majority of intellectual oppositionists approached in this research were, at the same time, historians or humanists (either salaried or *amateur*), so that both their sociopolitical and professional commitment made some of them put their expertise at the service of what they understood as a truthful and just cause and directly recount the events they had witnessed¹¹⁰⁸ or taken part in; or, furthermore, write a more elaborate and detailed essay about them. Such were the cases of Jan Józef Lipski and his works on KOR, Andrzej Micewski's comparison of the Catholic groups Pax (closely connected to officialdom) and Znak (the Catholic legal opposition) or what Łepkowski himself and especially Holzer did with *Solidarność*¹¹⁰⁹. Before them, former members of the Resistance against Nazi and Soviet invaders in World War II like the Home Army had also shared their oppositionist experience and recounted many episodes of the 1940s through tolerated or clandestine books and radio broadcasts. Besides Bartoszewski, Tadeusz Żenczykowski (1907-1997)¹¹¹⁰ was one of the most prolific examples in this field.

The urgency in the recollection, gathering of material and writing of this kind of history increased considerably after the establishment of Martial Law. The military display of force (tanks and other kinds armored of vehicles frequently patrolled the streets since then), arrests without charge, house searches, restriction of communications, postal censorship, the establishment of a curfew, the confiscation and destruction of anything slightly suspicious of being pro-Solidarity and, above all, the illegalization of the Union and other opposition movements made *inteligenci* realize that December 13th, 1981 would mark the abrupt and largely unpredicted close of an era. Not strangely, the picture taken by Chris Niedenthal in those days showing a wheeled armored personnel carrier standing before the Moscow Cinema in Warsaw, where the film *Apocalypse Now* [*Czas Apokalipsy*] was running (Figure 17)¹¹¹¹, became an icon of the Martial Law period and the visual expression of many Poles' state of mind when they heard general Jaruzelski's communiqué on TV.

¹¹⁰⁸ They wanted "to bear witness to the truth", in Lipski's words. Lipski: *KOR...*, 457.

¹¹⁰⁹ Lipski: *KOR...*; MICEWSKI, Andrzej: *Współtrządzić czy nie kłamać? PAX i ZNAK w Polsce, 1945-1976*, Paris/Kraków, Libella/Oficyna NZS UJ "Jagiellonia", 1981; Łepkowski: *Myśli o historii...*, 54-69; Holzer: *Solidarność...*

¹¹¹⁰ Publicist and former AK member who defended Warsaw in 1939 and took part in the Uprising of 1944. He occupied different underground executive posts along the War. After the Communist effective takeover of the Polish government, Żenczykowski left the country and worked in Radio Free Europe between 1954 and 1975. He was the author of many historical essays, like *Dramatyczny rok 1945*, London, Polonia, 1982; *Dwa komitety, 1920, 1944. Polska w planach Lenina i Stalina: szkic historyczny*, Paris, Spotkania, 1983; *Generał Grot. U kresu walki*, London, Polonia, 1983, or *Polska Lubelska 1944*, Warszawa, Spotkania, 1990.

¹¹¹¹ Source: <http://www.swiatobrazu.pl/100-najwazniejszych-zdjec-swiata-chris-niedenthal-czas-apokalipsy-21049.html> (accessed on August 8th, 2014).



Figure 17

It was the tragic end of their world as they knew it, Stański reflected in the last phase of his trial, because from then on, instead of opposing openly like KPN or Solidarity had done up until then¹¹¹², critical thinkers would be forced into the underground, in the belief that “acting secretly and in conspiracy there (...) [would] be fewer chances of getting caught and imprisoned”¹¹¹³.

Decades later, Jerzy Holzer told Magdalena Bajer that the pessimistic feeling he had about *Solidarność*’s dénouement since its formation (for it was too good to remain united and demanded too much to last within a Communist monopoly of power) led him to worry very soon about the preservation of the sources it produced, in anticipation of an imminent attempt of *damnatio memoriae* on the government’s side:

Almost since the beginning I knew that it would end up badly and... I adopted a practical attitude, namely I gathered up materials. A great amount of printed documents and other kind of materials were at home and, luckily, in December, when they [the *milicja*] arrived, they did not search the house, they only took me to Rakowiecka¹¹¹⁴ —my wife tucked everything away in the [Warsaw] University archive. When I was released, on April 30th, 1982, I immediately sat down and began writing the history of *Solidarność*. Its genesis was pessimism, a pessimism that told me that this period was at its close, sooner than expected, and that it was necessary to write about it.¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹² KPN members had actually been imprisoned more than a year before Martial Law, in September 1980, because their radical pro-independent program was considered especially threatening for Polish Communist circles and the Soviet Union. Their trial lasted 17 months (June 1981-October 1982) and became the longest political process in PRL’s justice courts. Stański said his last words in September-October 1982.

¹¹¹³ Stański in *Ostatnie słowa...*, 10, my transl., also 20.

¹¹¹⁴ Holzer refers to Rakowiecka Street of the Mokotów borough in Warsaw. Besides its relevance during Warsaw Uprising and the crimes committed by the Nazis in the area, after World War II the place became sadly known for other reasons too: in number 37 there was (and still is) the Mokotów Prison, where Communists jailed and tortured political prisoners and underground fighters in the Stalinist period. In addition, the headquarters of PRL’s Ministry of Home Affairs (including the Security and Police Services) were at number 2A; people held in detention were sometimes taken there from the Mokotów Prison to be interrogated, like in December 12-13th 1981.

¹¹¹⁵ “Nie przeżyłem...”, in Bajer: *Blizny...*, 67, my transl.

Another conviction underlay in some of Polish intellectuals' narratives about their own opposition movements, namely that they were better authorized to tell such story because they had experienced it first-hand. A belief that, in a much smaller scale, mirrored Holocaust survivors' position about who had the right to tell what they had gone through in extermination camps¹¹¹⁶. For them, that action combined the personal and the social/ national, memory and history in the making. "... As a participant in the creation of this fragment of history", Jan Józef Lipski wrote in the introduction to his work *KOR. A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981*, "I felt it necessary and was competent to present the events described in this book; with similar justification, an author of memoirs can publish his work and by the same token render a service to historians and to all other readers interested in the subject"¹¹¹⁷. As members of *inteligencja*, these oppositionists understood that it was their duty "... to give an account of events which are now part of history, of an immediate and living history, such that without knowledge of these events it is difficult to understand Poland today"¹¹¹⁸. Similarly, at the end of his book *The Church and the Left* [*Kościół, lewica, dialog*] (1979), Adam Michnik quoted a poem by Zbigniew Herbert where one can read: "go upright among those who are on their knees/ among those with their backs turned and those toppled in the dust// you were saved not in order to live/ you have little time you must give testimony"¹¹¹⁹.

Stefan Kisielewski's creed when writing his *feliety* had much to do with this belief as well. His aim was to share his view of the world with his readers and express his worries about the country's bad situation in spite of being despised for it and being labelled a pessimist for not supporting officialdom's discourse of "normality":

I am precisely a pessimist in today's Polish affairs, I do not see an advantageous way out from this disadvantageous system of small and big historical vectors. What is there left for me to do, then? In my writing craft there is only one thing left —to bear witness, to provide fairly well-prepared documentation. (...) Independently from everything, I will inscribe this appraisal, introduce it in a bottle and throw it to the sea, so that it is kept there. I will do so, it will be my "spiritual desertion" from collectivity, from EVERY collectivity...¹¹²⁰

In his defense of individuality, Kisiel consequently conceived a lonely fight against Communist power, apparently without trying to convince anybody —though, for his words and thought to have an impact, he had to count necessarily with others. But maybe he was not thinking so much about his contemporaries as about those who came after them. At some point, some of his bottles might float to a safer shore and its corked messages be profited to call once again the Communist system into question. Only that finally happened much sooner than he and many other oppositionists expected.

Interestingly, even some of the *inteligenci* who did not contribute with their work to opposition's history of the present in Communist times assumed that they *should* have done so at some point. For instance, Bronisław Geremek considered himself a "sinner" for not having followed this testimony pattern before; he felt that, in a certain sense, he had betrayed the historian-oppositionist's moral code and fled from his responsibility: "Je trouve que cette dérobade est inadmissible et je la pratique. Je sais

¹¹¹⁶ Hernández Sandoica: *Tendencias historiográficas...*, 533-534.

¹¹¹⁷ Lipski: *KOR...*, 2.

¹¹¹⁸ Lipski: *KOR...*, 465.

¹¹¹⁹ Michnik: *The Church...*, 214. HERBERT, Zbigniew: "The envoy of Mr. Cogito", *Selected Poems*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977 (transl. by John and Bogdana Carpenter).

¹¹²⁰ Kisielewski: "Czy pesymizm...?", 702-703, my transl. This is obviously linked to his pessimistic stance during Warsaw Uprising too. Kisielewski: "Czy pesymizm...?", 699; "O mojej religijności", 665-668; "Ja jestem figuynka...", 584.

que je suis pécheur à l'égard de mon métier d'historien."¹¹²¹ He never wrote a notebook or diary out of fear of being caught by the police and, worst of all, of causing the arrest of his colleagues, as he had witnessed more than once after a house search. Since his initiation in public life, he became extremely cautious with what was written or could be heard, even when he was assured they were not being recorded, like during the meetings prior to the Round Table agreements —his lack of trust in authorities simply weighed too much and was too well-founded to believe otherwise. As a consequence, Geremek understood that his interviews with Jacek Żakowski were a late fulfilment of this long-deferred mission, a way to compensate for the previous documentary and memory gap: "... c'était ma façon de faire ce que je devais faire. J'avais le sentiment que je devais le faire, et j'ai essayé de le faire par cette voie-là"¹¹²².

Far from being regarded as antagonistic approaches to reality, history and journalism were closely linked in critical intellectuals' minds for two reasons: firstly because, according to them, both fields were founded on the same professional and ethical principle —that of providing truthful information and an impartial in-depth analysis; and secondly because, thanks to the immediacy inherent in Polish oppositionists' present time narratives and collected sources, the classic differences in time span between journalism and history writing were overcome. Sometimes it was difficult to tell where one gender ended and the other began. For example, the interviews with former Communist leaders and writers in the Stalinist period, like the ones that the journalist Teresa Torańska or Jacek Trznadel (n. 1930) made, were considered a very valuable document by other *inteligenci*, including historians such as Krystyna Kersten (Chapter 3). But it also happened the other way round: some works adopted a journalistic form as a way to popularize history, eg. through "interviews" with past historical figures. The past was thus taken to a present scenario and became much more communicative and understandable for the majority of Polish readers¹¹²³.

Bronisław Geremek had a very positive opinion of journalists, whom he considered not just the narrators of ongoing history, but actually the historians of contemporary times. He admired their ability to draw conclusions from recent events and rapidly suggest valid and bold hypotheses, contrary to what professional historians were taught:

Aux journalistes, j'attribue non seulement le rôle de narrateurs de l'histoire en devenir, mais encore celui, plus sérieux, d'historiens de la 'contemporanéité'¹¹²⁴. Avec ma formation d'historien médiéviste, mon habitude de me créer de vastes fichiers aux seules fins d'émettre de timides hypothèses, je n'ai rien d'un journaliste, ou plus exactement rien du talent journalistique.¹¹²⁵

Jan Józef Lipski also valued journalism and chronicles as the purest form of freedom of speech in the PRL period and as one of the most effective means to spread

¹¹²¹ Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 78.

¹¹²² Duby and Geremek: *Passions...*, 80.

¹¹²³ Torańska: *Oni...*; TRZNADEL, Jacek: *Hańba domowa: rozmowy z pisarzami*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1986; *Stare numery*, London, Aneks, 1986; WIERZBIAŃSKI, Bolesław: *Teheran, Jalta, Poczdam. Reportaż w przeszłość*, New York, Bicentennial Publishing Corp., 1985; CHAJEWSKI, Adam [pseud. Anty-Frelek, Anty-Kowalski]: *Burza 1939*, Warszawa, Biblioteka Historyczna i Literacka, 1981. Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 28.

¹¹²⁴ Something similar, though with other connotations, was suggested by Pierre Nora in the volume *La nouvelle histoire*. Nora, Pierre: "Présent", in LeGoff, Chartier and Revel, Jacques (dirs.): *La Nouvelle Histoire*, 467-472; SÁIZ GARCÍA, Maria Dolores and FUENTES ARAGONÉS, Juan Francisco: "La prensa como fuente histórica", en *Enciclopedia de Historia de España VII. Fuentes-Índice*, dirigida por Miguel Artola, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1993, 527-528.

¹¹²⁵ Geremek: *La rupture...*, 14.

their opposition message and achievements. To start with, he didn't consider that his essay about KOR was a scholarly work, not only because he resorted to his own memory in some details or because it contained subjective appreciations, but specifically because, in his opinion, it was "... too much of a chronicle and does not sufficiently attempt a synthesis that would order the sequences of facts within a theoretical framework that —as I firmly believe— no work with scholarly ambitions can do without"¹¹²⁶. Due to the lack of other sources besides KOR's, which prevented the elaboration of more polyphonic narratives, and the risk of destruction of their own by PRL authorities, the members of the Committee had to limit themselves to tell their own story and leave comparisons and interpretations for better times:

Given a situation in which information about the Workers' Defense Committee will have to be one-sided for a long time to come, so long as the political and police archives concerning the issues addressed here remain inaccessible, and so long as participants in the movement have to exercise discretion concerning not only such information as the addresses of print shops (the owners of flats where they were set up would not like to be named even now, in the days of "Solidarity") but also such historically more important information as the sources of specific news items published in the KOR press or the identities of persons using pen names —it seems that in such a situation, to attempt a more ambitious approach to the subject would be deceptive and naive.¹¹²⁷

After all, a basic, moral task such as that which KOR aimed to perform with the repressed workers required a basic, simple narrative; the same kind of "simplicity" that Kisielewski mentioned when explaining who might have the key to today's world, quoting Adam Mickiewicz's verses. Thus, it was Lipski's "...conviction that a knowledge of the facts is necessary for the understanding of any historical or social phenomenon but also that any other sort of history, if perhaps more valuable intellectually, would misrepresent what KOR really was"¹¹²⁸.

Closely related to Kersten's idea of providing "raw material" to readers and recounting things "as they really were"¹¹²⁹ (Chapter 1), Lipski acknowledged "the need for a historical journalism" that provided "information and knowledge", unlike official media did (*Żołnierz Wolności, Trybuna Ludu...*)¹¹³⁰. Honest journalistic material as, in his opinion, KOR's newspaper *Robotnik* provided, could be the basis of future history works, an important contribution to the preservation of truth and a way of giving significance to people's actions during and after the peaks of repression experienced in the PRL: "Such articles might also prove useful for scholarship. In the humanities, intelligent, incisive, and intellectually inventive journalism has frequently achieved results necessary for the formulation of scholarly problems, and sometimes its cognitive value can be compared favorably with more strictly scholarly attempts devoid of intellectual pathos"¹¹³¹. It was no waste of time, then, to begin with the basics: carry out an initial selection of sources, sort them out, make them accessible to people, try to give them a global sense and a narrative structure... In sum, oppositionists were setting the ABC of their own history in the making:

Today, topics of contemporary history need to be treated in works that, without being overly ambitious, attempt nevertheless to introduce some order into specific problems. Anyone who has

¹¹²⁶ Lipski: *KOR...*, 1.

¹¹²⁷ Lipski: *KOR...*, 1.

¹¹²⁸ Lipski: *KOR...*, 6-7.

¹¹²⁹ Kersten: *Narodziny...*, 7-9.

¹¹³⁰ Lipski: *KOR...*, 2.

¹¹³¹ Lipski: *KOR...*, 1.

ever been concerned with scholarly research, even superficially and with a minimum of methodological awareness, knows that information rarely has an absolute and unassailable cognitive value. Important facts and trivial facts constitute elements of wider contexts, and these are always cognitive constructs. Despite all this, work on the foundations of future syntheses, work that organizes the available information, has generally not been proven useless, but rather the opposite, even when this work is still theoretically naive.¹¹³²

The fleeting, perishable character of the news and information provided by mass media didn't discourage opposition *inteligenci* nor dissuade them from publishing. Quite on the contrary: as we remarked before, many felt it was the best way to spread their thoughts and keep them safe in a kind of "virtual archive" made of all critical readers' libraries and minds. In an article significantly entitled "History will be told" ("Historia będzie opowiedziana"), Stefan Kisielewski, knowing he was being spied on, assured that he didn't keep at home his notes and registers for his "research" on human behavior just in case they might get wet, be "snowed upon" or blown away by the wind..., alluding to censorship, house searches and confiscations. He was actually transferring these "results" to a Public Library (i.e. *Tygodnik Powszechny*) where they were accessible to other interested "researchers": "Extraordinarily, (...) their opinions allow me to believe that my work will not be in vain, that the Chronicle of the History of Human Behavior will be a valuable material for a future, more modernly developed history of our country"¹¹³³.

The idea of conceiving books and periodical publications as potential travelling archives transcended the individual sphere soon after the implementation of the Martial Law, when several associations and underground publishing houses decided to launch collections devoted to opposition documents and oppositionists' accounts of the past few years. The most outstanding and prolific enterprise of this kind was that of *Archiwum "Solidarności"* [Solidarity's Archive]¹¹³⁴.

After December 13th, 1981, several groups of oppositionists closely connected to Solidarity (including some who were in jail), independently from each other, developed the idea of creating an archive containing documentary evidence of the most important past and present avatars of *Solidarność*: meetings, relations with Communist authorities, organization in the Martial Law period, strikes, trials and repression, reports about underground press, etc. Such initiatives joined together by the end of 1982. During the next two years, the participants in the new-born project gathered all the saved written information and tape recordings about the banned trade union and devoted themselves

¹¹³² Lipski: *KOR...*, 2.

¹¹³³ Kisielewski: "Historia będzie...", 524-527, quote from 527, my transl.

¹¹³⁴ Among others, within the "Documenty" sub-series: *Komisja Krajowa NSZZ "Solidarność". Posiedzenie w dniach 11-12 grudnia 1981 r.*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1986; *Komisja Krajowa... 23-24 marca 1981; Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza NSZZ "Solidarność". Posiedzenie w dniach 31 III- 1 IV 1981*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1987; *Komisja Krajowa NSZZ "Solidarność". Posiedzenie w dniach 22-23 października 1981 r.*, Warszawa, Przedświt, 1987; *Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza NSZZ "Solidarność". Posiedzenie w dniach 2-3 września 1981*, Warszawa, Pomost, 1988.

In the sub-series "Relaje i opracowania": SZEJNERT, Małgorzata and ZALEWSKI, Tomasz: *Szczecin. Grudzień, sierpień, grudzień*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1984; KWIATOWSKA, Wiesława [pseud. Wiesława Kwaśniewska]: *Grudzień '70 w Gdyni*, Warszawa, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Pokolenie", 1986; *Bydgoszcz —marzec 1981: dokumenty, komentarze, relacje* [wyb. i oprac. K. Czabański], Warszawa, Most, 1987.

Finally, in the third and last sub-series, "Polska Stanu Wojennego": *Proces Pałubickiego*, Warszawa, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1985; *Co powiedzą nasze dzieci? Relacja o strajku w kopalni 'Ziemowit', 15-24 grudnia 1981 r.* [wyb. i oprac. J. Cieszewski, pseud. J. Fajerant], Warszawa, Most, 1986. Mikołajczyk: *Jak się pisało...*, 27.

to selecting and transcribing materials¹¹³⁵ and to hiding them in safe places until they could be issued. In an interview for the official underground weekly periodical of *Solidarność*, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, an unidentified member of *Archiwum "Solidarności"* explained in 1987 that Solidarity's advisers had considered it was too soon to publish all the available documents, especially the last meetings of the National Commission, when the disagreements, radicalization and clashes between Solidarity members became more evident, because they feared this could be used as a proof to justify the subsequent implementation of the Martial Law. However, the wish that every *Solidarność* trade unionist should know about his/her organization's past and be counted prevailed over the advisers' cautiousness, and the project received Lech Wałęsa's support and economic aid from the new Solidarity central underground structure, the Provisional Coordinating Commission (Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna, TKK)¹¹³⁶.

The majority of works published by *Archiwum "Solidarności"* (out of a total of twenty-four) were issued by the publishing house *Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza*. Each volume was preceded by the same brief "Note from the publishers", where its members explained the reasons for this initiative:

The existence of NSZZ "Solidarność" and other independent movements formed in 1980-1981 is one of the most important events of Polish recent history. Its massiveness and spontaneity, its popular character, its roots, based upon the fundamental values of European civilization and Christianity, the non-violence principle, make all the experiences they've introduced surpass the boundaries of national history.

Never in the history of "real socialist" states, beginning with the Kronstadt Rebellion [1921], through Berlin Uprising, Polish October, Budapest Uprising, Prague Spring —until *Solidarność* times, had a revolt against the Communist system lasted so long, acquired such a size or adopted such institutionalized forms. As a result, none of the preceding social movements had left behind such an amount of documents and materials, which are worth preserving and safeguarding not just as an extraordinarily important fragment of national history, but also as sources for studies about Communism and about the needs and aspirations of societies under Communist rule, that didn't enjoy the chance of expressing their needs and aspirations in normal circumstances. The knowledge and study of the history of *Solidarność* is indispensable as well for all the present and future opposition groups in Communist states, and for Western countries' politicians and political scientists involved in relations with the Eastern Bloc states.

One of the strategic goals of the December 13th coup was the seizure of Solidarity's archives, that Communist powers wanted to erase not only from social reality, but also from social memory—but both these goals were just attained in a very limited scale. Realizing that Communists always try to manipulate history in an Orwellian way, a large number of people acting independently from each other immediately took up the task of saving Solidarity's documents, achieving a great success.

The target of the Documentation Team of *Archiwum Solidarności*, that works in collaboration with *Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza "Nowa"*, is to save and preserve at least part of the legacy of independent social movements and the first governing structures of NSZZ *Solidarność*. Our job is to collect, arrange and make accessible documents, accounts and analyses. (...)

Our enterprise covers dozens of volumes. We wish that our work enables to keep safe for history the biggest possible part of Solidarity's truth, not just of its highlights, but also of its nadirs. We want to protect from oblivion and destruction all our preserved documents and we ask for help in their gathering.

¹¹³⁵ The latter proved to be a real challenge. See "Rozmowa z przedstawicielem Archiwum "Solidarności"", *Serwis Informacyjny Społ.* [ecznego?] *Komitetu Nauki*, 56, 15-XI-1987, HU OSA 300-55-10 (Subject Files, 1972-1990), box 10, file "Drukarze i Wydawcy Prasy Podziemnej (1), 1983-1988".

¹¹³⁶ POMIAN, Anna: "The State of Solidarity's Archives", 9-VII-1987 and "Związek powinien znać swoją przeszłość. Rozmowa z redakcją Archiwum "Solidarności"", *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 211, 13-V-1987, 2, both in HU OSA 300-55-10 (Subject Files, 1972-1990), box 10, file "Drukarze i Wydawcy Prasy Podziemnej (1), 1983-1988"; "Rozmowa z przedstawicielem...".

Remember —by contributing with *Archiwum "Solidarności"* to the extent of your possibilities you save a portion of truth, you open a breach in a system that coerces us with lies.¹¹³⁷

These introductory paragraphs condense many of Polish opposition intellectuals' perceptions about past and present we have analyzed in this research. Firstly, the authors of the "Note" carve out a niche for Solidarity in history by linking it both with older and newer traditions (Catholicism, European ethos, non-violence principles¹¹³⁸), as well as with previous revolts (Polish 1956, Budapest, Prague...), but also by insisting on its pioneering character in size, organization, duration and degree of success. Thus, they inserted the Union in a historical discourse through a combination of continuity and change features.

Secondly, one may also spot in these words the result of another combination of complementary elements: that of hope and fear. Through their opposition activities, *inteligenci* eventually recovered their agency and became aware of their historicity. This intertwined with the acute sense of danger and the fear of destruction that pervaded their spirits, making them not only aware of the fact that everything was yet possible (*Jetztzeit*), but also of the mortal peril that lay ahead if the "winners" got the chance to strike back again. That was the great difference, according to *Archiwum "Solidarności"* members, between the 1980 experience and previous Polish revolts, in which the lessons of the past had not been taken on account (eg. December 1970 during June 1976 protests).

As a consequence, on this occasion oppositionists thought ahead of their times and elaborated historical discourses and/or databases about their own movements and present-day affairs, like *Archiwum "Solidarności"*, in order to frustrate Communist authorities' attempts to crush their movements and master their history and memory 1984-like, that is, with a view to distorting or erasing them from the country's annals. This way, Polish oppositionists rendered a superior hermeneutical meaning to their actions, and *Solidarność's* experience was set as an example and an inspiration for others in the conviction that it had contributed (and still did) to alter the course of history in Poland and beyond. But this was not just something that a large Trade Union or opposition movement could do. Actually, it all depended on the sum of efforts of individuals. Each anonymous person had to retrieve his/her *podmiotowość* and be conscious that they could also help to change things, for example by contributing to the documentary project and funding of *Archiwum "Solidarności"*¹¹³⁹.

The editors tried to involve their readers in this task alluding to another fundamental pillar of intellectual opposition's self-perception: truth. Closely linked to authenticity and trust, the truth was seen by intellectuals as a crucial identity element to differ from Communist power (characterized in opposition narratives by deception and manipulation) and therefore to keep holding an alternative moral leadership among Polish society. Hence their intention of recounting everything about *Solidarność*, including its darkest hours. It was preferable to share and build together the truth than to hush it up and provide a powerful weapon to political enemies. Solidarity opened a novel socio-political field of action in Communist Poland and, due to this, had to face new problems, situations and crises, so it was important for oppositionists to acknowledge and learn from their mistakes in order not to commit them again.

¹¹³⁷ "Nota od wydawców", in *Proces Pałubickiego...*, 5-6, my transl.

¹¹³⁸ Certainly, Mahatma Gandhi was one of the pioneers of this form of protest in contemporary history. A fundamental work by the French philosopher and expert in Gandhi and non-violence Jean-Marie Muller, *Stratégie de l'action non-violente*, (Paris, Le Seuil, 1981), was translated to Polish and published in *drugi obieg* as *Strategia politycznego działania bez stosowania przemocy*, Warszawa, Krag, 1984.

¹¹³⁹ "Związek powinien..."; "Rozmowa z przedstawicielem..."; Pomian: "The State of Solidarity's...".

Lastly, in connection to the historicization process, the accounts and sources provided by *Archiwum "Solidarności"* dealt mainly with socio-political aspects, decision-making processes and fundamental texts issued by or related to Solidarity. It was not an easy task to gather or write up that kind of material, one of its members argued, because "the Poles only write poetry willingly". He/she added that their Team was looking for volunteer authors who wanted to write monographs about *Solidarność* in different regions and about other independent movements, like the peasants', with a view to preparing regional chronologies of events of Solidarity's sixteen months of legal existence, as well as a few biographical dictionaries of the Union's local leaders. However, this person complained, the accounts they received basically contained "unimportant" details and much emotional and personal information instead of focusing on the crucial events that had taken place in the country. In general, underground publishing houses preferred other kinds of genres or more controversial and sensationalist topics. Perhaps collecting and cataloguing papers and tapes of opposition movements in an orderly and rational way was a duller and less profitable job than writing memories or *publicystyka*, the participants in *Archiwum "Solidarności"* admitted, but it was certainly fundamental to give a sense to their history and to prevent it from falling into oblivion. Rather than to average readers, their volumes of collected documents and accounts were addressed primarily to historians, social scientists and politicians, both from the West and, hopefully, from Poland and other Eastern Bloc countries in the near future, and were only sent abroad as *tamizdat* once they had been previously analyzed and arranged by their Team¹¹⁴⁰.

In the light of all this, we may conclude that the members *Archiwum "Solidarności"*, basing themselves in clear and restrictive selection criteria, plus convinced about their rigor and impartiality, produced documents-truths (actually documents-monuments) about Solidarity's (immediate) past destined to an international intellectual minority. Its arranged volumes were conceived as the groundwork that would enable the eventual study of the phenomenon of Solidarity and its comparison with similar opposition organizations around the world. It was, in sum, an erudite expression of the change in the mastery of national historical narratives that was taking place in Poland since the emergence of KOR.

¹¹⁴⁰ "Związek powinien...", my transl.; "Rozmowa z przedstawicielem..."; Pomian: "The State of Solidarity's...".

Concluding remarks

In search of the best past for a better future

Throughout this research we have analyzed some of the perceptions and concerns that Polish opposition intellectuals, spurred on by a pressing need in the present, had about their country's past and the course of time in general.

Resorting to a theoretical background on myths, Eastern European intelligentsia, opposition to Communism and Walter Benjamin's Theses "On the Concept of History", we have proven that critical *inteligencja's* discourses contain a very particular symbiosis of history and politics due to their authors' double attempt to explain/reformulate the past and to understand the present situation with a view to changing it.

In Chapter 1, we analyzed how opposition intellectuals' self-perception took shape through the reassessment of past political stances and the definition of their duties in the present. In Chapter 2, we went over *inteligencja's* views about the Polish nation "beyond" and "throughout" time —that is, understood as a century-old tradition of ethical behaviors or cluster of values, on one hand (what the nation is, should aspire to, isn't and shouldn't be), and in terms of society's awareness and agency in the last two hundred years, on the other (development, misuse, loss, recovery...). In Chapter 3, we studied how intellectuals further defined Poland's ethos and tried to reorient some of the Poles' most usual opinions and attitudes by revisiting and reflecting on Polish historical relations with Russia and the West, with a special emphasis on the question of (co)responsibility. Lastly, in Chapter 4 we approached the ways in which *inteligenci* perceived history and time, such as the conjunction of cyclic and lineal or the pioneer issue, and we demonstrated that the topics of hope and helplessness, power and responsibility, posterity and search for truth, plus the gathering, writing and publication of documents related to opposition activities, can be regarded as different outcomes or materializations of historical consciousness and historicization of present time, whether deliberate or unconscious.

In the light of this, we have come up with the following transversal conclusions about Polish opposition *inteligencja's* self-perceptions and discourses on the past:

I. Historical discourses enabled Polish critical intellectuals to define themselves and their nation in opposition to the communist regime. This was achieved following various interconnected paths¹¹⁴¹:

1) Assumption of mythical role

Feeling endangered due to their double commitment (professional and oppositional), critical intellectuals assumed in their narratives the mythical role traditionally attributed to *inteligencja* in Poland, characterized above all by its trans-ideological nature and sense of national duty. A social role that, additionally, they also believed was being challenged by PRL authorities.

This self-assigned mission entailed an engagement with the nation's problems and needs plus the encouragement of collective awareness through different fields of

¹¹⁴¹ Besides already mentioned theoretical works, this division was partially inspired as well in Ricoeur: "Myth and History", 275-277.

education and art, including history. In other words, *inteligenci* were to guide and advise the rest of the Poles, or even decide what should be done.

As self-appointed spiritual leaders and representatives of the Polish nation, the majority of their ruminations dealt at bottom with ethics, authenticity or the search for truth—which is not strange if we consider that myths are an expression of transhistorical values, a behavior pattern and a moral guide in times of misfortune. One way or another, morality was a top priority in their world view, not only because it helped them give a consistent meaning to their past and present decisions, but also because it secured them social support and contributed to preserve their authority in face of a discredited political system.

The fact that opposition *inteligencja* tried to locate itself within historical continuity through its discourses rendered further meaning and purposefulness to its stances. Moreover, by appropriating the custody and evaluation of national (and especially immaterial) heritage, it consciously performed a “tiger’s leap into the past” to become the tacitly authorized (re)interpreter of former knowledge and, at the same time, its transmission belt.

2) *A combat against oblivion, or history writing as a hermeneutical weapon against the “winners”.*

Defying official historical policies and repression, Polish intellectuals engaged in a fight against oblivion in their historical narratives. It was carried out in two ways: by retrieving past failures and by reminding about society’s greatest feats, understood materially and/or morally. This had to do, in the first place, with the vindication of forgotten or defeated traditions despised by authorities (like Abramowski’s, the “Golden Age” and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, May 3rd Constitution...) and, in the second place, with what *inteligenci* regarded as the ups and downs of consciousness, empowerment and agency due to oppression (nineteenth- and early twentieth-century flare-ups and spreading of national awareness, Warsaw Ghetto and Warsaw Uprisings’ “pointlessness”, the establishment of the Communist regime and following protests...)—a process that, in their opinion, reached an unprecedented triumph quantitatively and qualitatively speaking with the Gdańsk Agreements and the formation of Solidarity, despite further setbacks.

3) *History revisited as a “useful past”.*

In their effort to know how to confront communist power and work in favor of the Polish nation and their own interests, intellectual oppositionists turned to history for inspiration, guidance and justifications as well, either for themselves as members of *inteligencja* or for society in general—though both are closely connected due to previously-stated reasons.

Through the reconsideration of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century clash between idealism and realism, for instance, many of them developed various balanced or conciliatory formulae with a view to preserving the best of both traditions. Nevertheless, such operation was restricted to general attitudes, stances and *modi operandi*: it was not destined to copy specific political ideologies or procedures, such as those present in the Second Republic.

On the other hand, it was crucial to determine what Poland was and was not, what it should aspire to and what it shouldn't be. Usually, the ethos of the Polish nation was defined in terms of values and ideals associated to Western European, Catholic or Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth cultures, of which *inteligencja* felt particularly fond (freedom, human dignity and rights, equality, fraternity, justice, truth, humanism, democracy...). In their view, these imponderables had been amplified and kept safe owing to experiences of danger and suffering alien to Western Europe, which had provided Poles with an insightful vision of reality as well.

However, there were also social tendencies that raised concerns among some *inteligenci*, like nationalism, xenophobia and violence. On this occasion, to fight against oblivion didn't mean to face communist "winners", but the Poles' own "obliviousness" and reticence to admit their share of responsibility in history. It was essential too to do away with harmful ideas, myths or prejudices that acted as burdens and prevented society from moving forward, such as hatred towards Russia, Yalta or the repeated treason of the West for not aiding Poland when in need ("myth of the West"). To remind about and acknowledge Polish misconceptions, misdeeds and mistakes was the first step towards leaving them behind and not repeating them. This was taken further by intellectuals through the promotion of tolerance and pluralism (supplying historical examples), education and comprehension (supplying historical explanations), plus empowerment (supplying advice). Far from vindicating anything, as in the previous point, it was about expiating guilt and acquiring a better knowledge of things to enable redemption.

Conversely, one of the most noteworthy theses within *inteligenci's* counter-hegemonic discourses was the Manichaean antagonism between the Polish nation and the State apparatus, which is explained and justified using historical and linguistic arguments in order to transmit a strong and clear message of nonconformity and resistance. Sometimes, this opposition overlapped or blended with others, such as Polish nation-Communism, or Polishness-Russianness, the latter not being completely denied even by the most open-minded intellectuals, who regarded the national ethos of their neighbors as half-European, half-Asian at best.

Focused on which aspects of the past must be "brought back" to the present and which should be discarded, this reassessment of Polish history in *inteligencja's* discourses contained mystification and demystification in varying degrees.

On the one hand, *inteligencja* was not just a myth in itself, but also a producer of mythical narratives. Accordingly, its historical works are dotted with other nineteenth-century myths coming from broader Messianic and Insurrection frames, like "the Christ of Nations" (Polish leadership of the peoples submitted to the USSR), "the Bulwark of Christendom" (reconverted into "the Bulwark of Western European values", conveying endurance) or the "black myth of the West" (loss of values and spirituality).

On the other hand, intellectuals also fulfilled an enlightenment or educational task that involved demystifying. We appreciate it in their endeavors to get rid of the "myth of the West" by readjusting the object of Polish pride, hopes and strength. Similarly, the "Pole-conspirator" myth and the idea of mission (entailing suffering, death and sacrifice, plus resurrection) were nuanced at some points and adapted to the needs of present-day context: first, there were to be no more victims if oppositionists could avoid it (one could sacrifice oneself, but never others); second, violence should be completely ruled out in opposition movements and critical society; thirdly, underground conspiracy should not be idealized by oppositionists, in order to prevent a new estrangement from the rest of the Poles. The notions of death and resurrection were sublimated into less drastic or physical actions, like other forms of repression (eg. jail, censorship, fear), loss

of agency, moral debasement... and subsequent retrieval of freedom, courage, *podmiotowość* and morality.

In Chapter 2 we pointed out that, according to Ewa Domańska, the absence of violence during Poland's transformation involved that the mythical death and rebirth cycle (which included sacrifice and spilling of blood) was not totally fulfilled on that occasion, remaining strangely incomplete¹¹⁴². We wondered then whether Polish national myths would manage to survive *transformacja*. Our provisional answer to this question (which we will hopefully be able to undertake in future researches) is yes —only that some of them will have transformed and probably new ones will take shape (perhaps short-lasting, owing to the fact they were generated in times of relative success rather than catastrophe?).

We agree with the idea that “history, as a permanent process of reconsidering the past, means that demystification is remystification”¹¹⁴³. Therefore, instead of focusing on violent components, Polish intellectuals might as well have tried to start up at some point (perhaps already in the 1970s?) a kind of mythical tradition about non-violence, “self-limiting revolution” (ideal goals, realistic means) or about the notion that, if united and aware, a nation becomes powerful enough to vanquish a foreign, dictatorial state (i.e. ultimate success instead of cyclic defeats). As to *inteligencja*'s own myth, we have been able to see along the work that, as long as it's linked to imponderables, it can survive in democratic times. In sum, we venture that what probably took place along the *transformacja* years was merely a transition from some of the “classic” nineteenth-century myths to more modern and less radical political ones¹¹⁴⁴, though also incarnating a new “beginning” (end of twentieth-century democracy).

4) *In search of the whys and wherefores.*

The quest for causality gives an ethical tone to the course of events and confirms the link between history and tragedy¹¹⁴⁵. Polish opposition intellectuals tried to make recent history more intelligible in their narratives and were not afraid of wondering if things could have turned out otherwise —that is, if other pasts would have been possible. This was especially so in the case of what were regarded as defeats or setbacks, like the establishment of communist regime in Poland (1944-1948) or the implementation of Martial Law (December 13th, 1981).

In the examples we have analyzed, there was a clear need to demand moral accountability for Poland's or Polish opposition's ordeals, and *inteligenci* came to the conclusion that, in certain adverse historical contexts, the Poles hadn't actually been capable of changing anything despite their efforts and mistakes, and that, quite on the contrary, the ball had been in communist authorities' court, whether Soviet or Polish. We can appreciate in opposition's works, hence, a recurrent ethical discourse reproaching the USSR and the communist party for their complete and constant unwillingness to change or negotiate, which is also linked to the Manichaeian opposition of “State vs. nation” or “us vs. them”.

Polish society couldn't change anything, except for one thing: how it underwent defeat. Either surrendering, or fighting until defeated. That made a crucial moral difference for *inteligenci*.

¹¹⁴² Domańska: “(Re)creative Myths...”, 256-257.

¹¹⁴³ Stráth: “Introduction...”, 19, footnote 1.

¹¹⁴⁴ In the line of those described by Ifversen: “Myth in the Writing...”, 456.

¹¹⁴⁵ Also inspired in Ricoeur's comments on Herodotus: Ricoeur: “Myth and History”, 276.

II. Narratives on the past influenced oppositionists' perception of the present and the future, engendering specific forms of reasoning and action.

These forms could be summarized in the conjunction of cyclic and lineal perceptions of time (the former with positive and negative connotations, depending if considered an endless curse or a new opportunity to succeed), the pioneer issue, the feelings of hope and helplessness when standing at the crossroads of history, the notions of power and responsibility, the question of posterity and the search for truth, plus the gathering, writing and publication of documents related to opposition activities. The latter aspect was also directly connected to the aforementioned combat against oblivion, spurred on especially since the Martial Law period, when danger was seen as imminent.

Past injustices were given a meaning from the present (partitions, bad governments, foreign interferences, deprivation of agency...) but, conversely, their remembrance also gave a meaning to oppositionists' present and became one more reason to protest, as if throughout modern national history there had been, in essence, just a single struggle pursuing a single goal: independence and freedom. Past frustrated attempts justified a new try, whereas the unparalleled achievements of such try attained by opposition movements like KOR or, later, Solidarity, made the past gain a different sense due to the feeling of culmination. That is why cyclic and lineal images combined in *inteligencja's* discourses.

The key in Polish intellectuals' mission was to conceive history not as something dead and buried, but as something actual, alive, and, most importantly, as an inherent quality or right of each individual, therefore shared within society (historicity). By erasing the fictitious and misleading barriers separating past, present and future, oppositionists tried to demonstrate that history was being written and rewritten ceaselessly, and that the Polish nation should have the leading voice (or voices) in its modification and plotting from then on. It was fundamental to restore in people the senses of hope, empowerment and responsibility to change things.

Polish opposition's elaboration of a history of the present, plus the ensuing production and collection of sources, was a sociopolitical and hermeneutical counteraction based on or inspired in positivistic premises which, in the dissidents' case, stemmed from a shared experience of discovery of truth—that is to say, of the repressive and deceitful character of the PRL regime they had previously supported. Such intellectual realization transcended *inteligencja's* professional or academic spheres and led to (or justified) a firmer political stance and oppositional activity, in order to prevent a similar distortion of present time—and thus of the development of opposition movements and their own biographies—by communist authorities in the future.

The “anticipation of history” caused by the process of historical awareness and its offspring, historicization of present time, turned oppositionists into the masters of the historical narratives of the future: their version of the history of 1945-1990 period, and especially of 1976-1989, would prevail over communists'.

III. The purposes of *inteligencja's* discourses on the past were to unite, liberate and embolden.

In connection to the traditional, mythical duties attributed to intelligentsia, Polish oppositionists aimed, in the first place, to unite Polish society in pursuit of a common goal: that of putting an end to PRL regime and democratizing a free and independent country. Despite their differences of opinion in politics, historical interpretations or

socio-economic organization, plus their diverse backgrounds, they spoke the same language and transmitted shared images of Poland's past and present situation through their writings and interventions, contributing to a feeling of cohesion. In other words, they preferred to concentrate on general, inclusive aspects and transhistorical values in order to favor an atmosphere of consensus and cooperation among people and convey an image of strength and purposefulness.

In the second place, intellectuals sought to "liberate" the Poles, which involved, among other things, the acknowledgment and expiation of past guilt, the overcoming of harmful historical perceptions and the emancipation from previous spiritual dependences.

In the third and last place, Polish *inteligencja* wanted to remind its fellow countrymen about their own strength as a nation and instill in them the courage they needed to take an active stand in the struggle for a better future.

As modern, platonic demiurges, *inteligenci* breathed historical awareness, agency and self-confidence into Poles to convince them that, all together, they were capable not only of overturning PRL regime, but of doing so in a peaceful way.

In sum, with their reflections on history and time, Polish opposition intellectuals back in 1976-1991 offered a personal and critical approach as to who Poles had been and could become as a nation, and resumed *inteligencja*'s mythical, Promethean mission of guiding their country towards better days in moments of hardship.

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- Ringelblum's Archives in Warsaw Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny): <http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2014-10-08-ringelblum-archive>
- Yad Vashem's online exhibition about the Ringelblum archives:
<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/ringelblum/index.asp>